RELIGION AND CIVILIZATION

by

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Translated from Urdu Version by

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Academy of
Islamic Research and Publications
Lucknow (India)

Series No. 42

Editions:

1st Edition, Urdu, (Delhi), 1943

2nd Edition, Urdu, Rahim Yar Khan (Pakistan) 1958

3rd Edition, Urdu, (Lucknow), 1975

2nd Edition, English, (Lucknow), 1975

Price Rs. 10.00

Printed at:

Mudran Kala Bhawan, Lucknow (India)

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From The Translator

In the name of Allah : the most benevolent, the most merciful

THE valuable contents of this slim volume were first delivered in the form of lectures by Maulānā Abul Hasan ᶜAli Nadwī, Rector, Nadwatul-ᶜUlamā, Lucknow, at the Jamiā Millia, Delhi, in 1942 and published as such by the Jamiā in Urdu under the caption "*Mazhab-o-Tammadun*". Thereafter the brochure was reprinted by *Adara-e-Nashrīyat-e-Islam*, Rahimyar Khan, Pakistan. Like other works of the Maulānā it is a work of great scholarship and erudition, presenting, in its limited compass, a concise yet comprehensive view of revelatory eschatology and cosmology, and the distinctive features of the socio-ethical order raised on its basis *vis-a-vis* the other systems of social existence having their roots in the materialistic, so-called intellectual and mystical schools of thought. In bringing out succinctly the peculiar traits of all these systems, the author has raised certain thought-provoking issues which would ever continue to engage the attention of the students of religion and society.

Every civilization is made by the lights that guide it. The author has brought out into relief the values which can establish a harmonious equilibrium in the whole sphere of human life—spiritual, physical, individual, social, economic and political. On the one side of this middle path is the ancient Indian, Christian, Neo-Platonist and Greco-oriental Gnosticism of the late-classical period of Europe, defined as 'World and life negation' by Dr. Albert Schweitzer, which requires the individual to 'bring life to a standstill in himself by mortifying his will-to-live, and to renounce all activity which aims at improvement of the conditions of life in this world.'[1] This view of the life and the world is impracticable since it regards worldly life as a stage-play, encourages asceticism and produces strange eddies of beliefs and practices which sap the very foundation of social existence. The world-view on the opposite end seeks to analyse and explore, to test and prove all things in the light of reason, give a free play to the bodily desires and rejects everything beyond the ken of human senses. The Greeks were the first to present this view of life and the world which has gradually reasserted itself during the Renaissance of Europe. The spirit of science and rationalism, secular humanism and nationalism of the modern age can be directly traced to these elements of Hellenistic thought. This view of life, no doubt, corresponds with the will-to-live but it nevertheless leads the life of the individual to a spiritual void which makes his life and the world purposeless; moral values become

1. Eastern Thought and its Development: Oxford University Press, 1956, P. 1/3.

meaningless and the man finds no secure foundation to decide what is right and what is wrong.

The failure of contemporary Western society—disintegration of sexual morality, meaninglessness of honesty, economic exploitation, mental and emotional insecurity, compromise with higher principles, in short, the worship of the gods of Wealth, Comfort and Expediency—has made it obvious to many a keen observer that the present civilization is heading towards its own destruction despite its glorious achievements in the fields of science and technology. Maryam Jameelah (formerly Margaret Marcus), an American (now Pakistani) Muslim, has no hesitation in saying that "the basic theme of Western civilization has been its revolt against all spiritual and religious values. In view of this outlook prevailing in the world today, one can easily understand why there is more hatred, strife and violent upheaval than ever before in history.[1] Another writer, Lewis Mumford, speaks of the "erosion of values, the dissipation of humane purposes, the denial of any distinction between good or bad, right or wrong, the reversion to sub-human levels of conduct"[2] as the cause of invisible breakdown in our civilization Material progress instead of giving hope to the mankind, is proving to be a source of despair. Mr. Northrop, a sociologist, declares: "Ours is a paradoxical world. The achievements which are its glory threaten to destroy it......... It

1. Maryam Jameelah: Islam versus the West, Kitab Bhavan, Delhi, 1969, pp. 26-27.
2. Lewis Mumford: The Conduct of Life, Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1951, p. 148.

would seem that the more civilized we become the more incapable of maintaining civilization we are."[1] A French Nobel Prize winner and surgeon, Alexis Carrel, lists the failures of the present civilization in these words :—

> "In truth modern life has set them free. It incites them to acquire wealth by any and every means, provided that these means do not lead them to jail........................ It allows them to frequent excitation and the easy satisfaction of their sexual appetites. It does away with constraint, discipline, effort, everything that is inconvenient and laborious."[2]

Obsession with the material gains and pursuit of narrow selfish ends lead to confusion, degradation and immorality in the political, business, labour and family life. Needless to say, the current ethical, social and political chaos is unmistakably a product of the mental climate of the modern world which regards religion as something irrelevant to life or an impracticable idealism of the Medieval Ages. Modern man, especially in the West, seems to have firmly decided that religion is something of little importance which we can take or leave, as we like ; but, should never allow it to intrude into the sphere of our social, economic or political affairs. The trend of our time has been aptly illustrated by the late Archbishop Temple, in his book on *Christianity and the Social Order*, by an incident where a group of bishops asked to be heard

1. F.S.C. Northrop : The Meeting of East and West : The Macmillan Co., New York, 1946, p. IX.
2. Man, the Unknown, p. 30.

in regard to an industrial dispute that was seriously disturbing England. Mr. Baldwin, the then Prime Minister of England, asked the bishops how they would like it if he were to refer the question of Athanasian Creed to the Iron and Steel Federation. The Prime Minister obviously meant to put religion in its place. Secular humanism has replaced religion by a frankly irreligious structure of morality and state. We see the pattern of society being increasingly moulded to become antagonistic to the ethical values upheld by religion, while religion itself is made to compromise with "this-worldly" concept of materialism in order to give it a push in the direction diametrically opposed to its own moral ideals.

As a reaction to the failure of religion in the West, the attitude of secular humanism and its political systems towards religion may appear to be quite logical but these systems have, nevertheless, been responsible for the ever-growing dissensions between different groups, communities and nations, and the unhappiness of man. Muhammad Asad (formerly Leopold Weiss), a keen observer of contemporary Western civilization, feels that the ultimate explanation of the 'deep disquiet which is apparent throughout the modern world' lies in the utilitarian, relativistic concept of morality adopted by the West for the consideration of political and social problems, in preference to a moral obligation that arises from a permanent, absolute moral law provided by religion. He says:

> "For reasons of their own, the people of the West have become disappointed with religion (their religion), and this disappointment is reflected in the

ethical, social, and political chaos now pervading a large part of the world. Instead of submitting their decisions and actions to the criterion of a moral law—which is the ultimate aim of every higher religion—these people have come to regard expediency (in the short-term, practical connotation of the word) as the only obligation to which public affairs should be subjected; and because the ideas as to what is expedient naturally differ in every group, nation, and community, the most bewildering conflicts of interest have come to the fore in the political field, both national and international. For obviously, what appears to be expedient from purely practical point of view to one group or nation need not be expedient to another group or nation. Thus, unless men submit their endeavours to the guidance of an objective, moral consideration, their respective interests must clash at some point or other; and the more they struggle against one another, the wider their interests diverge and the more antagonistic become their ideas as to what is right and what is wrong in the dealings of men."[1]

And again:

"It has become evident that none of the contemporary Western political systems—economic liberalism, communism, national socialism, social democracy, and so forth—is able to transform that chaos into something resembling order; simply because

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1. Muhammad Asad: The Principles of State and Government in Islam, 1961, University of California Press, pp. 4/5.

none of them has ever made a serious attempt to consider political and social problems in the light of absolute moral principles. Instead, each of these systems bases its conception of right and wrong on nothing but the supposed interests of this or that class or group or nation—in other words, on people's changeable (and, indeed, continuously changing) material preferences. If we were to admit that this is a natural—and therefore desirable—state of man's affairs, we would admit, by implication, that the terms "right" and "wrong" have no real validity of their own but are merely convenient fictions, fashioned exclusively by time and socio-economic circumstances. In logical pursuance of this thought, one would have no choice but to deny the existence of any moral obligation in human life: for the very concept of moral obligation becomes meaningless if it is not conceived as something absolute."[1]

Viewed in the context of the present anti-religious trend and failure of the economic and political solutions offered for the ills of humanity, the reflections in this brochure on the role of religious view of life and the world, the living content of a truly religious faith, the moral attitude and behaviour arising from such a faith and its relation with civilization assume special importance. The author has traced the primary source from where the evils dominating the present world emanate. He has shown that the attitude and behaviour of man have their roots not in the economic, social or political systems

1 *Ibid., Op. cit.*, p. 5/6.

but in the ethical and moral concepts of these systems which, in the ultimate analysis, spring from eschatology or the world-view held by man. He has explained why religion cannot withdraw into a corner to deal with the so-called spiritual matters leaving the vast areas of human life to the ephemeral judgement of man. By delineating the limitations of sensory perceptions, intellect, philosophy and mysticism the author has demonstrated that none of these is in a position to provide us guidance, with certainty, as to the social and moral behaviour we ought to adopt for our well-being and happiness. The nature of each, and the types of social and moral structures raised thereon, clearly bring out the fact that much of what is now being passed on in the name of *pure reason* is not at all modern, but, on the contrary, age-long *ignorance*, which has repeatedly misled the caravan of civilization on a path leading to repudiation of transcendental truths, crass materialism, moral depravity and then to its disintegration.

The analysis made by the author will convince every enlightened and unprejudiced reader that the socio-ethical view-point imparted by Divine revelation, which is provided in an unadulterated form by Islam, with its wider aspects and implications, is the only mainspring of guidance which can reconstruct a healthy and balanced society and save the present civilization from disintegration and ruin towards which it is drifting under the impact of a sensate culture. The purpose of revelation is to provide directives in a field in which human reason has always failed him in the past. It is indeed a Rock on which man has to build his civilization, or, else the civilization shall pound itself

to pieces against that Rock.

In my translation I have tried to follow the Urdu text as faithfully as possible, but have departed, where necessary, from a strictly literal rendering in the interest of capturing the mood and content of the original. I have also suitably incorporated in the text the longer explanatory notes which were later on added by the author for elucidating the discourse. I have, however, given a few biographical and historical foot-notes here and there so as to explain necessary references. It is now for the readers to judge how far I have succeeded in my endeavour.

I must express my deep gratitude to the author who was kind enough to go through the manuscript and also approve a few additions. I am also indebted to Dr. M. Asif Kidwai who has very kindly gone through the translation and suggested many improvements. I have profited from his guggestions and comments but the responsibility of shortcomings and errors, if any, is exclusively mine. I would be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge the assistance extended by my nephew Sayed Maqbool Ahmad in ways more than one in the printing of this book.

Mohiuddin Ahmad

CHAPTER ONE

Religion, Philosophy and Civilization—Some Common Questions

THERE are some questions which are common to Religion, Philosophy and Civilization, on the answers to which rest their very foundations. What is the beginning and the end of this universe? Is there a life after death, and, if there is, what sort of a life is it? And, is any particular code of conduct necessary for success in the Hereafter?

Also, what is this universe in its totality? Who is sustaining and managing it in an orderly fashion under a transcendental and universal law? What are His attributes and what relationship does man bear towards Him? What should be the attitude of man towards Him? Is there any measuring yard of an ethical code prevailing in the universe, besides the physical laws, and, if there is, what is it? What is the place of man in this Cosmic order? Is he the master of himself or accountable to someone? What is or should be the object of his life in this world?

These are fundamental questions which cannot be ignored by any system of thought or religion which claims

to have its roots in human consciousness. These issues are ingrained in the nature of man and govern the various aspects of his behaviour. Religion claims to provide a definite answer to these questions, philosophy seeks to discuss them and civilization raises its edifice on the foundations furnished by them.

We cannot solve any problem of our life without finding a dependable reply to these questions, nor chalk out, without it, an outline of civilized social existence on this planet. Any civilization, howsoever materialistic or peripheral it may be, has to have some answer to these questions which permeate its structure, constitute the base for its edifice and provide a driving force for its intellectual outlook and behaviour. All subjective and objective manifestations of any civilization, its social order, ethical codes, laws, politics and philosophy reflect the basic concepts of its people in regard to these questions. If you know the answer given by any civilization or the people to these questions you can easily fill in the colours in its portrait of life. Similarly, if you analyse the underlying concepts of any civilization, you can tell with certainty the answers given by it to these fundamental questions.

These are the questions that spring from human consciousness and are as old as man himself. In every age these issues were raised, their answers given and philosophies, modes of life and cultures evolved which have left their imprint on the pages of history. Not unoften, however, we merely look at the surface of these civilizations and do not go deep enough into them to discover their distinguishing features which differentiate

one from another.

We have to see what are the sources available to us for answering these basic questions and how have these been answered so far. We shall have first to take stock of our faculties which can apparently help us in finding the answers to these issues.

CHAPTER TWO

Sources of Knowledge—An Evaluation

I

SENSORY ORGANS

NATURE has endowed us with sensory organs which are the greatest source of acquiring certain and specific knowledge. We cannot be sure of anything except that which is perceived through our sensorial reactions. We have, indeed, discovered this world and derive benefit from it through these senses: we have found out many physical laws through them—in short, we have gathered a vast treasure of observations, experiences and perceptions through them, and therefore, we should first look at the above questions once more and try to solve each one of them through the agency of our senses.

Sense Perception

But, can we do it? A number of philosophers regard the senses as a weak, doubtful and unreliable medium for the acquisition of knowledge. A Philosopher of the

seventeenth century, Nicolas Malebranche[1] (1638-1715), expounds this view in his book entitled '*Recherche de La Verite'*. He says that the main reason for our mistake in this regard is the erroneous belief that the senses, which have been given to us to serve practical ends, are also capable of revealing to us the nature of things.

Another philosopher, Michel De Montaigne[2] (1533-1592), puts forth the view that the knowledge of man is extremely imperfect and his senses are uncertain and erring. We can never be sure that what they impart to us is always true. They merely show us the world as conditioned by our own nature and circumstances. Not external objects, but merely the condition of the sense-organs appears to us in sensuous perception. In order to be able to place implicit faith in the senses we must possess an instrument that can control them and, then a means of controlling this instrument, and, so on.

Limitation of Senses

Nevertheless, let us take the first question. Where did we come from and where have we to go? In other words, what is the beginning and end of the Cosmic Order? Can our eyes, ears, hands and tongue guide us to find an answer to this question? We can only find out where we presently are through our sensory impressions. These faculties lead us only upto a certain limit; they stop before an impregnable wall. We cannot see or

1. A History of Modern Philosophy, Vol. I, Dr Herold Hoffdring, London, 1924, p. 248.
2. *Ibid*, p. 28.

hear beyond a certain distance while other sensory organs suffer from even greater limitations. Whether there is a life after death or not can neither be affirmed nor denied by sensorial observations. In fact, our sensory organs are to subserve life and they confine themselves to the limitations inherent in life itself. They cannot provide an answer to or affirm or deny anything outside the field of their powers. At the most, they can deny of having perceived something but cannot deny its existence. But, is perception and existence one and the same; whether anything not discernible through the agency of sensory organs non-existant? Do we act on this premise in our daily life and refuse to accept everything not actually perceived by our senses? No. We do not, for such an attitude would totally demolish the distinction between a man and an animal and all the treasures of knowledge and culture would be rendered meaningless.

Now, since we cannot perceive life by means of our sensory organs, how can we obtain further details of it through them.

Sensory perceptions are likewise ill-suited to furnish a reply to the question about the reality of Cosmos. Sensorial observations can only comprehend different objects, they perceive parts of the world or conceive the reality in fragments. They have undoubtedly perceived and discovered a large number of fragments of the world but can we grasp the inner harmony between them which integrates these various pieces into a composite entity, into aworld in its totality: do they lead to the underlying cause of essential unity in diversity, the spirit of unity running through apparently conflicting phenomena? The essence

and motive power behind the well balanced Cosmic order is even harder to conceive through the methodical equipment of human senses. We can comprehend a part of the physical laws governing this universe because their effects are perceived and experienced by us. Some of these are quite obvious, as, for example, we know that fire burns, water quenches thirst and poison kills. But the experience about moral behaviour is of an entirely different nature. We can find out heat and its effect by the tactile sense but we cannot discover the harm inflicted through cruelty, falsehood or misappropriation by means of our senses. We need an ethical intuition, religious faith and a deep feelling of spiritual security, for finding our way to the effects of moral behaviour, and these are quite distinct and different from the feelling experienced by touching fire.

We do feel that our sensory organs are quite free and act independently of everything beyond them. They are apparently not accountable to any super-human entity. We also do not find any difference between man and beast except that man is a more developed animal capable of speaking and reaching conclusions by connected thought. Clearly, such a concept can only lead us to the conclusion that the ultimate aim of life should be satisfaction of human desires, in a better way and with greater ease than animals can do.

This is a conclusion, natural and inevitable, if we rely only on the functioning of our sensory organs. I shall not dilate here on the type of cultural and socio-ethical order that can be designed on the basis of this concept or the faults and short-comings that must underlie a structure

raised on such a foundation. I shall come to it later on.

II

INTELLECT

The difference between animals and human beings is accountable mainly to intellect or reason. All the issues raised in the beginning concern man alone and therefore let us see if human reason can solve these problems of human life and determine his place in the universe.

Limitation of Intellect

If we were to evaluate reason impartially and rationally, without being over-awed by it, we would find that by itself reason is unable to perform its function. In order to find out something that intellect does not know, it has of necessity to take the help of other faculties lower than itself. It has to depend on recollections borrowed from sensory impressions. If we analyse rational thought and go back to the stages through which it has passed, we will discover that initially there were simple sensorial perceptions and observations which were used by intellect in its process of arriving at a particular conclusion. Intellect could not have conceived anything by itself without drawing upon the earlier simple sensory perceptions stored up in the mind.

Where our senses do not help or the observations and perceptions fail, our reasoning faculty also becomes helpless like the man who wants to cross an ocean without a ship or to fly without an aeroplane.

You can very well test this hypothesis. None howsoever intelligent can solve a complicated arithmetical equation if he is not conversant with numerical figures and the elementary rules of that branch of knowledge. Nor can anybody solve a geometrical theorem without knowing its basic principles or decipher a writing without gaining acquaintance with the alphabets. His intelligence and reason will be of no avail unless he possesses some elementary knowledge in that particular field.

Now let us take the questions posed earlier. All of them belong to the realm of metaphysics. Is there even one of them whether appertaining to the beginning and the end of the universe, or to life after death, or to the Creater and the Sustainer of the Cosmic order, or to His attributes, or transcendental ethical code, or the role of man in this world about which we possess any recollection derived from a sensory perception or experience? Can we acquire even a rudimentary knowledge of these truths through our sensory organs, or, for that matter, through our intellect or reason? Indeed, a truly rational course for the intellect is to take an impartial attitude in this matter like the sensory organs and declare that it is neither capable of proving, or comprehending anything, nor has it a right to deny anything solely on the ground of its own limitations. A blind man has no right to deny the observations of anyone simply because he cannot see the thing for himself. He can, at the most, deny of

having himself seen the thing described but he has no right to affirm or deny, much less to begin describing the thing in detail.

But, man is never satisfied and always yearns to probe into regions unknown to him. He, therefore, continues his effort. Intellect, inquisitive by nature and armed with a blind faith in its capabilities, always strives to grasp these problems and formulates with the help of imagination, reason and speculation, certain answers on the basis of whatever limited and imperfect data it can gather from the senses. This is what we call philosophy.

III

PHILOSOPHY

Common sense is astounded to discover that during the past two and a half thousand years philosophy has, although basing its claim, as it does, on intellect, reason and logic, been discussing problems of which it did not possess even an elementary knowledge. The flower of human race, the best of intellect amongst them, has literally been engaged in a wild goose chase. The philosophers have not been content to discuss God, His attributes, His omnipotence, the co-relation between man and his Creater, the means of His comprehension, the beginning and the end of the Cosmos, life after death and other theosophico-metaphysical issues but have gone

ahead to furnish some detailed descriptions with such exactness as befits only a chemist experimenting with tangible objects in a laboratory.

It is also not less surprising that despite free thought and criticism to which the philosophers have always remained wedded, extremely few of them could detect the fundamental mistake in their approach to the problem. We thus find only a few names in the lengthy record of philosophers who raised their voice against this basic mistake. But these objections, often raised only once in centuries, were hardly paid any heed and philosophy continued its journey unabated on the same path.

Incompetence of Philosophy

Al-Ghazali[1] (1059-1111) was fully aware of the limitation of intellect and, in fact, this very incompetence of philosophy made him turn towards mysticism and to

1. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali was born in Tūs in Khurasān in 1059. One of the leading scholars of his time, he was invited in 1085 to the court of Saljukid Emperor Malik Shah and appointed as professor of law in *Nizamiya University* of Baghdad. These years of glory for Ghazali were accompanied by inner spiritual struggle and in 1095 he relinquished his brilliant career. He spent about eleven years in ascetic and mystical practices and theological and philosophical studies at Damascus, Mecca, Jerusalem and Egypt. Ghazali, reaching beyond theology, philosophy and mystical experiences, found the balance between intellect and the senses. Later, he resumed teaching at *Nizamiya University* of Nishapur and founded a seminary at Tūs, where he died in 1111. With more than 70 books to his credit, Ghazali's genius made possible the domination of *Kalam* (dialectics) over the philosophical school of *Mu'tazila* (Translator).

launch upon the quest for the beatific vision of reality. He has often repeated in his books that unlike physical and mathematical sciences the metaphysical premise of philosophy is only a concept without any firm foundation. In *Tahafatul-Falasifa* he says that philosophers expound their theories on the basis of ideas and imagination without enquiry and credence, but it is surprising that in a book designed to refute the metaphysical views of the philosophers he does not attack them on the basis of this very incompetence of philosophy but opposes them because of their contradictory deductions and arguments.

Another Arab philosopher who clearly understood the intellectual inadequacies of philosophy was Ibn Khaldūn[1] (1332-1406). He was not, strictly speaking, a philosopher but a scholar who had an analytical mind and could not accept anything uncertain or doubtful. In his famous 'Introduction to World History' he has criticised philosophy at several places. He is fully aware of the limitations of intellect. In it he says:

'..............................Do not trust the claims of

1. ʿAbd-ar-Rahman Ibn Mohammad Ibn Khaldūn al-Hadhrami was born in Tunis in 1332. For seven years he served the king of Fez in Morocco, and then the Sultan of Granada in Andalusia (Spain). Later he settled in Cairo where he occupied the post of grand *Cadi* and died in 1406. His masterpiece, Prolegomena (*Muquddamah*) to his Universal History, among other things, dealt with the philosophy of history, historical criticism and the theory of social evolution. He is considered to be precursor of Vico, Gobinaeu and Spengler in the philosophy of history and sociology as well as the herald of economic liberalism, five centuries before it became the predominant principle recognised by the civilized nations of the world. (Translator).

thought to be able to comprehend beings and their causes and to follow out the ramifications of existence—this is sheer nonsense.

For every percipient imagines the world to be restricted to his range of perceptions, which is far from being true. Notice the deaf, for whom the world is confined to the four senses and reflection, and for whom no sounds exist. In the same way the blind lack knowledge of visible things. It is only the traditions they take over from their parents, teachers, and acquaintances that make them admit the existence of what they do not perceive. In other words their belief is founded on the general opinion around them, not on their instincts or sense perceptions. Similarly animals, if they could answer our questions, would be found to deny the possibility of intellectual, reflective acts of the mind.

This point being established, it is probable that there is a kind of perception superior to our own; for our perceptions are created and cannot comprehend the vast range of beings. God's creation, being vaster than man's, is outside man's range of comprehension. He alone comprehends all.........

This does not impugn the validity of the mind or its apprehensions. The mind is an accurate scale, whose recordings are certain and reliable; but to use it to weigh questions relating to the Unity of God, or the after life, or the nature of prophecy, or the divine qualities, or other such subjects falling outside its range, is like trying to use a goldsmith's scale to weight mountains. This does not mean that the

scale is in itself inaccurate.

The truth of the matter is that mind has limits within which it is rigidly confined; it cannot therefore hope to comprehend God and His qualities, itself being only one of the many atoms created by God."[1]

Among the Muslim Ulama Ibn Taimiyah[2] (1263-1328) has made out this point on various occasions in his writings on dialectics He has refuted the mistakes of dialecticians with great insight and courage.

The philosopher who, however, completely demolished the snare of intellect's self-deception is the German critic, Emmanual Kant (1729-1804), whose "Critique of Pure Reason" elucidated the limitations of reason, and, which, in the words of Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbāl, 'rendered

1. An Arab Philosophy of History; Charles Issawi, London, 1950, (pp. 165-66). (Quotation from Vol. III, p. 29 of the Prolegomena of Ibn Khaldūn).

2. Ibn Taymiyah was born in Ḥarran in 1263, during the troubled days of Mongol invasion. At the age of twenty-one he became a professor of jurisprudence after the death of his father. During the danger of Mongol attacks on Syria and Egypt his public speeches incited the people to the defence of their countries, Malik Nāsir, King of Egypt, received Ibn Taymiyah with great respect but the scholar's uncompromising attitude and blunt statements against the conventional body of the then theologians turned the latter against Ibn Taymiyah, who had to suffer imprisonment and solitary confinement for long periods. Out of a large number of his works on religious and judicial matters, about forty-five exist today, and jurists consider his legal decisions authoritative. His chief concern was to purge religion of the rituals and traditions which had accumulated since the time of the Prophet and contaminated the religion. (Translator)

the whole work of rationalists to a heap of ruins'.[1]

VI

DIALECTICS

It would be in the fitness of things to mention here the branch of philosophy which was evolved for the defence of religion. It was not in itself a philosophy yet it discussed the same issues, employed the same methodology, and considered itself competent to meet philosophy on its own ground; it claimed to prove the existence of God, His attributes and other theologico-metaphysical problems through reason. Both were thus basically one in their approach and method although they claimed to be rivals of each other. The dialecticians, as the religious philosophers were called (Scholastics in Europe), entered into detailed discussions of eschatological and metaphysical problems like the philosophers although their aims was diametrically different and they wanted to disapprove the conclusions of the philosophers.

it would be interesting to know that when the dialectics entered the field to combat philosophy and attacked the latter with its adversary's weapons, which were perhaps

1. Iqbāl: Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Oxford University Press, London (1934), p. 5.

the only effective weapons to be employed in such a combat, it forgot the limitations of sensory perceptions and intellect. It is amusing that the dialecticians could not realise their mistake even after the limitations of perception and intellect were pointed out to them by the combating philosophers, and they continued to wrestle with the details and incidental issues of metaphysical problems for hundreds of years. Nevertheless, the belated discovery of the limitations of human senses and intellect, thus made by the philosophers themselves, was an achievement.

After having his fill of philosophy and getting disenchanted with it, Al-Ghazali wrote, "*Tahafut-al Falasafa*: Incoherence of Philosophers", which raised a storm of protest and indignation in the circle of philosophers. Ibn Rushd[1] (d. 1198), who was a great votary of Greek philosophy in general and of Aristotle in particular,

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1. 'Abul-Walid Mohammad Ibn Rushd, known as Averroes in the West, was born in Cordova in 1126. In 1169 he was appointed the *Cadi* of Seville and two years later he was called back to become the personal physician of the King of Morocco. Later he resumed as the Chief Judge of Cordova. His principal works in the sphere of philosophy were his commentaries on Aristotle. He wrote a reply to the 'Incoherence of Philosophers' by Ghazali. His works were translated into Latin and Hebrew early in the thirteenth century. The influence of Averroes in Europe grew so strong in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that his works replaced those of Aristotle in the curriculums of European Universities. In spite of his pronounced rationalism, Averroes was neither a materialist nor an anti-religious man. He believed in the perfect harmony between faith and reason, or, between revelation and science. (Translator).

wrote *'Tahafatul-Tahaful*: Incoherence of Incoherence' in reply to Al-Ghazali's book. In it he says that:

"The entire discussion by Al-Ghazali exceeds the limits of *Shariah* for it seeks to examine issues not permitted by it and also because human faculties are unable to comprehend them. It is not necessary to examine the issues about which the *Shariah* is silent.. Nor, is it desirable to claim the conclusions drawn through reason or contemplation as a part of the religious faith. It leads to conflict and a great evil. Thus, where the *Shariah* is silent, one should remain silent and tell the people that human intellect is ill-equipped to comprehend these matters."[1]

In another book *'Al-Khashf-An-Manahij-il-Addillah-fi-ᶜAkaid-il-Millah*: Explanation of Faith', Ibn Rushd very ably expounds the superiority of Quranic arguments over those employed by dialecticians. In this book which furnishes a fine example of his deep understanding of the issues involved, he reiterates the inability of men to comprehend metaphysical problems through the help of reason alone.

We entirely agree with Ibn Rushd that sensory organs and intellectual faculties endowed to human beings cannot comprehend metaphysical reality. But philosophers can be intelligible to men only and Aristotle, Plato, Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicinna) and Ibn Rushd were all human beings.

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1. Ibn Rushd: *Tahafatul-Tahafat*, p. 110.

M'utazila

Among the dialecticians, the group known as *M'utazila* were the most enlightened followers of intellect who conceived God on the pattern of man and the Hereafter on the basis of the existing world, and freely discussed the transcendental ethics and moral laws completely disregarding the limitations of human senses and intellect. Perhaps this is a weakness to which every school of speculative thought succumbs in its infancy. A contemporary scholar, critic and historian who appreciates the scholastic achievements of *M'utazila* points out their mistake in these words :

> "Perhaps their weakest point was their undue emphasis on concretizing the unseeno n the basis of perceptible realities. They conceived God completely in accordance with the concept of man and made Him to subserve the laws of Cosmos. They made justice incumbent on God in the same way as man conceives it for himself and his world. They ignored the fact that justice is itself relative and changes with the time. What was considered as just in the Middle Ages might be considered unjust today. If this is so in the time-perspective of this world, what can we say when we switch over to the Cosmic-time. Similarly, we see that we have limited and varying concepts of good, bad, desirable and better. We find that a man holds one view of anything with a limited outlook but his decision changes when he takes a broader view.

Similarly, the discussion whether attributes of God are part of His Being or not, created or eternal,

and similar other arguments arise from conceiving the un-observable on the pattern of observable, but, the fact is, that nothing is common between the two. They supposed that perceptibility, dimension, time, space, cause and effect were ingredients essential for every existence. In my opinion this is wrong because these pertain to human laws, or, we can say, to the laws of our world. We cannot say that the laws of our world will be applicable or inapplicable to a world other than our own. Thus subjecting God to human laws on the ground that these laws govern the man, can hardly be acceptable to an intellect which knows its own limitations and does not overstep the range of its operation. This was not a mistake committed by *M'utazila* alone for the dialecticians too after them slipped into the same error."[1]

V

MYSTICISM

Besides philosophy or speculative thought, there is another school claiming to discern reality through spiritualism or mysticism. The two ancient centres of

1. Ahmad Amin: *Dhoh-al-Islam*, Vol. III, II Edition, Cairo, 1941, pp. 66-70.

this school of thought were Egypt and India. The movement of spiritualism once gained a great momentum in Greece and Byzantine as a reaction to excessive intellectualism after coming into contact with the Egyptians and the eastern religions. However, the most powerful centre which spread mysticism far and wide was Alexandria in Egypt which was a meeting place for the western and eastern intellectual currents and religions.

The cardinal principle of this school is that sensory perceptions, intellect, knowledge, reason, logic, speculation and dialectics are all not only helpless but are actually an impediment in the comprehension of ultimate reality. The knowledge of ultimate reality can be attained according to this school, through divine enlightenment and intuition which can be brought about by purification of the soul, illumination of the self and development of a particular faculty which can perceive spiritual and metaphysical realities in the same way as our eyes see the material objects. This faculty is developed when materialistic self is cast off and sensory impressions are erased from human consciousness. The reality becomes discernible through that pure and unmixed intellect and inner light which is born out of prayer, penance and meditation with simultaneous denial and suppression of human desires and self-abnegation.

Philosophy and mysticism are essentially akin to one another as they proceed from the same premise. Just as philosophy and dialectics endeavour to find reality and pin their faith in their own efforts, mysticism too claims to discover it through its own methods. In fact, philosophy, dialectics and mysticism have a common goal differing

only in their ways; one wants to cover the distance on foot, another to fly up to it and the third to reach it through a secret tunnel. There is no denying the fact that beyond the material world there is a celestial realm, impregnable and outside the ken of the senses and imagination. It is also true that man possesses certain senses and faculties which, if developed, can discover many wonders and mysteries which are not perceptible to his sensory organs.

But where does it lead to?. A secret sense or faculty in addition to those every human being possesses and the discovery of a world unknown to sensory organs.

We acknowledge that this additional sense exists, and, may be, there are other senses too. It is also possible that there are worlds other than our own, which require faculties specially suited to them for their perception. But all these are essentially human senses like the sensory perceptions we already know. Human perceptions, observations and impressions, and the knowledge derived therefrom are liable to correction and improvement while there is no evidence that any additional sense developed by man is incorrigible, perfect and not self-deceptive. Had it been so, there would have been no variation or contradiction in the findings of this additional medium of acquiring knowledge; no ground for scepticism in what it has to say at least about some of the principal issues. But we come across far more conflicting reports and contradictory statements in the experiences or visions of mystics, theosophists and spiritualists than there are in the findings of normal sensory perceptions. Their differences are even wider than

those of the different schools of philosophy.

Neo-Platonism

Now, let us take Neo-Platonism by way of example. Its expounders widely differed in their faith and practice. The founder of this school, Plotinus[1] (205-270) had no faith in the religion of his times, nor did he pray. He was a free thinker and believed only in meditation. But his pupil, Porphyry[2] (233-304), was a dry mystic. Plotinus believed in the reincarnation of human soul in the body of animal but Porphyry denied it. Another votary of this

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1. Plotinus (A. D. 205-270, was the founder and incomparably the greatest philosopher of the Neo-Platonist school. He came from upper Egypt but belonged to the Greek school by education and cultural background. The mystical union was for Plotinus a rare and transitory experience. He attained it, as Porphyry tells us, four times. It was the goal of all his effort and the source of the continuing power of his teaching. Philosophy for him was the way to union with the God through moral purification and intellectual enlightenment.

   The success of Neo-Platonism was rapid. Soon after Plotinus's death it came to dominate the Greek philosophical world completely. It deeply influenced, too, the intellectual world of the Christian thinkers. (Translator).

2. Porphyry (A. D.-233-304). Greek scholar, historian and Neo-Platonist was born at Tyre or Batanaea in Syria. He lectured on philosophy and endeavoured to render the doctrines of Plotinus intelligible to ordinary understanding. Porphyry is well known as a violent opponent of Christianity and defender of Paganism; of his book "*Adversus Christianos*" in 15 volumes, perhaps the most important of all his works, only fragments remain now. (Translator).

school, Proclus[1] (410-485), professed and practised the then Egyptian religion. He prayed to the Sun-God thrice a day and his religion was a strange mixture of the then existing religious cults and fetishisms. But they all lay a claim to have had glimpses of reality through mystic practices.

This very Neo-Platonism opposed Christianity under the leadership of Porphyry. It allied itself with the drive of the Roman Emperor Julian (331-363) to resuscitate Roman paganism. The inner light and spiritual illumination of the neo-Platonists did not help them to remain aloof from that despicable movement. In the words of the editors of Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics 'Neo-Platonism had definitely committed its fortunes to the sinking ship of paganism'.[2]

Eastern Mystical Creeds

Attention may here be drawn to the fact that religions not subscribing to revelation through the apostles of God, bear too much resemblance to mysticism and Neo-Platonism. The attitude of these religions towards life

1. Proclus (A.D.-410-485)—Born at Constantinople, he studied philosophy at Alexandria and Athens. He eventually became *Diadohcus* (i. e. successor of Plato in the Platonic Academy of Athens). Proclus is the most notable figure of the Athenian school of Neo-Platonism, which was distinguished by its passionate paganism and by its taste for elaborate metaphysical speculation. His chief importance in the history of philosophy is as one of the principal sources through whom Neo-Platonic ideas diffused to the Byzantine and Islamic worlds and the medieval Latin west. He greatly influenced Christian thought through Dionysius of Areopagite. (Translator).
2. Art. Neo-Platonism, p. 317, Vol. IX, 1930.

and society and the end of man are to all intents and purposes the same as we find in mysticism i. e. meditation, asceticism, monasticism and unification or annihilation in the Primal Being. And, what is more, these religions are grounded in an effort similar to mysticism, of finding out Ultimate Reality through speculative consciousness, penance and self-abnegation. It is interesting to note that Neo-Platonism too aimed at becoming a religion to save Hellanism from expanding Christianity until the latter itself became the official faith of the Roman Empire. The inherent similarity between mystical creed and the Indian Religions has been aptly brought out by Dr. James of the London University. He observes:

> "Indeed, the aim of the Upanishadic teachers was to establish a 'way of knowledge' which would enable those who adopted the prescribed meditative technique to attain at length complete identity with the One Ultimate Reality which underlies all existence (i.e. Brahman). This is summed up in the Chandogya Upanishad in the phrase *tat tvam-asi*, 'Thou art that,' meaning that the individual soul (Atman) has realised its identity with Brahman, the unqualifiable Absolute. Then, and only then, is release possible from all the hampering conditions of life in the phenomenal world of time and space which is ultimately illusory. When this state of bliss is reached, the passionless peace of Nirvana is attained, meaning literally, 'blowing out' or 'becoming cool,' a Buddhist ideal hardly different from the Upanishadic liberation (moksa).[1]"

1. E. O. James, History of Religions, London, 1964, Page 73.

Sankaracharya revived the system of religion and philosophy taught in Upanisads in the later half of the Eighteenth century and established his doctrine of absolute Monism. The great merit of Sankara, according to V. S. Ghate,[1] late professor of Sanskrit in Elphinstone College, Bombay, lay in his success 'in a most satisfactory manner in reconciling the mutually opposed texts of the Upanisads, which some times speak of the unity of supreme spirit, without attributes, which alone is real and of which one can give only a negative description, but some times assert the plurality, the supreme cause being possessed of qualities and capable of controlling from within the world intelligent as well as non-intelligent'. But how was the unity reconciled with the plurality, and with what results? Sankara solved the question by bringing in the principle of *Maya* or illusion which served like a two-edged sword to define knowledge and *moksa* into two fold grades 'corresponding to the two fold distinction of the *Brahman*, higher and lower.' The higher knowledge consists of the 'knowledge of the absolute unity of *Brahman* apart from which nothing really is', while 'the lower knowledge consists in the worship, *upasna*, of the lower *Brahman*, or *Brahman* in its phenomenal state, conceived as a personal Lord and Creator, *Isvara*.' Thus Sankara, while condemning ritualism and *Krama*, not only allowed but even defended worship of popular gods in the form of idols as symbols of the great Infinite for those who cannot rise to the

1. Article on Sankaracharya, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, 1958.

comprehension of one, changeless, non-qualified *Brahman*.

One cannot but admire the accomplishment of Sankara in bringing together the heterodox systems of belief and worship then prevailing under his own concept of Monism, or, rather reconciling the irreconcilable concept of the absolute, unchangeable and unqualifiable Primal Being with the phenomenal, personal deities of the common folk, yet, this was made possible only owing to diversity of esoteric experiential awareness of reality which lends itself to a variety of explanations.

Mysticism in Islam

It is to be noted that amongst the Muslim mystics intuitive and ecstatic experiences had once gained considerable importance as these were considered the only means for acquiring knowledge with certitude. They had different mystic disciplines for gnosis of Ultimate Reality although they could derive inspiration from the Prophet of Islam and the knowledge imparted by him.

Sheikh Akbar Mohiuddin Ibn 'Arabi[1] (1165-1240)

1. Mohiuddin Ibn ᶜArabi also called *Sheikh-i-Akbar,* the Greatest Sheikh, was born in Mursia (Murcia), Spain, in 1165. He resided in Seville from 1173 to 1202, studying *Hadith* and jurisprudence. In 1202 he began his travels in Hijaz, Iraq, Mousul, and Asia Minor. He returned to Syria, and died in Damascus in 1240. Ibn ᶜArabi founded the mystic school of Existentialist Monism, that is, beings have no existence except in what they obtain through participation in the Absolute Being. He regarded himself illuminated with the inner light. He left about three hundred books, two of which establish

[Continued on next page]

wrote[1] to Imam Fakhr-uddin Razi (d. 1210):

"God is beyond speculation and contemplation of intellect. Therefore the wise should devoid his heart of all cares if he wants to have a glimpse of Divine Reality."

Further, he goes on to elucidate:

"Therefore have courage in order to attain Divine gnosis through ecstatic experience, for those who undertake the search obtain knowledge from God, through illumination and not through reason. The courageous have been successful in finding the knowledge with certitude because they were not content with the knowledge and faith that had reached them."

Al-Ghazali too, as he owns it in *Al-Munqid-Min-adhdhalal*, found the certitude in knowledge through ecstatic experiences, illuminations and beatific visions. He writes:

"Look here, this is the knowledge with certitude only for those who have already attained it, and this is what they mean by it. They have obtained it through ecstatic visions which is by far superior and dependable than mere sensory perceptions, and only the former is fit enough to be relied upon."

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him as the greatest mystic of the Arab world were '*The Meccan Revelations*' and '*The Mosaic of Wisdom*'. Ibn ʿArabi's descriptions of Hell, Paradise and beatific vision inspired Dante to write' *The Divine Comedy*'. (Translator).

1. *Rasail-i-Ibn-ʿArabi,* Vol. I, Daiʾratul Maʿarif, Hyderabad, 1948, pp. 2-3.

Fallibility of Mysticism

The ecstatic experiences of Muslim mystics too are sometimes erroneous and contradictory.[1] One mystic might differ from the other and hold that the experiences of the other mystic were a mere illusion, or, that the beatific visions of the other mystic were simply intuitive and of an elementary stage from which the mystic has to forge ahead, and thus dismiss it as something else than Divine gnosis.

Scholars are aware of the pride of place held by Sheikh Mohiuddin Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240) among Muslim Sufis. Another Sufi, Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi Mujaddid Alf-Thani[2] (1564-1626), who is another luminary in this

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1. Dr. Radhakrishnan upholds mysticism in preference to organised religions as a necessary discipline for the development of spiritual vitality, yet, he has to admit that: "An ultimate inward similarity of the human spirit does not mean an absolute identity of mystical experience. There are individual variations within the large framework. In the East, for example, the mysticism of the *Upanisads*, of the *Bhagvadgita*, of Samkara, of Ramanuja, of Ramkrisna, of Zen Buddhism, of Jalāluddin Rumi are different one from the other. Similarly in the West, the mysticisms of Plato and Paul, of Proclus and Tauler, Plotinus and Eckharat differ from one another. The variations are not determined by race, climate, or geographical situation. They appear side by side within the same circle of race or culture, developing different tendencies and traditions".

   Eastern Religions and Western Thought: Oxford University Press, London (1940). p. 64 (Translator).
2. Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi Mujaddid Alf Thani—The Renewer of the second millennium—was born in Sarhind, Punjab, in 1564. He raised the banner of Islam during the reign of the Moghul Emperor

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field, writes in one of his letters[1] that:

> "It is surprising that Sheikh Mohiuddin appears to be one of those who have had enlightenment and was favoured with Divine gnosis, yet, some of his experiences are not only different from those of others but also erroneous."[1]

In his another letter he says:

> "Some of his (Ibn 'Arabi's) ecstatic experiences do not agree with the teachings of the orthodox school and are not correct."[2]

The differences between Ibn 'Arabi and Sheikh Mujaddid on Unity of Being or existentialist monism are well known to scholars although both had personal intuitive and ecstatic experiences. Sheikh Mujaddid writes that he and his mentor, Sheikh Khwājā Bāqī Billāh (1565-1604), were earlier on the same stage of existentialist

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Akbar who made a calculated endeavour to purge Islam from the socio-political life of the country and to evolve a new religion, *Din-i-Ilahi*, under the patronage of the State. Mujaddid propagated the teachings of Islam, proclaimed the truth undeterred by threats and even imprisonment in the Fort of Gwalior, and finally succeeded in re-introducing the Islamic law and its supremacy in the country. Sheikh Ahmad is the greatest mystic who not only strenuously opposed the pantheistic conception of *Tawhid* known as *Wahdat-ul-Wajud* but also unfolded a number of higher stages of mystical experiences yet untraversed by his predecessors. The subsequent Muslim reformers of nineteenth and twentieth centuries have drawn inspiration from this beacon of learning. He died at the age of 63 years in 1626.

1. *Maktubāt Imām Rabbānī*, Vol. I, Letter No. 266 (Newal Kishore Press, Lucknow). p. 316.
2. *Ibid.*, Letter No. 43, p. 59.

monism; illuminatory glimpses and other evidences confirmed their ecstatic enlightenment in this regard but when God raised them to higher stages of His gnosis, they renounced their earlier belief. He says:

"My exalted teacher and my master belonged to the school of existentialist monism as he had himself owned it in his letters and papers. Thereafter, God in his mercy caused him to advance from that stage and thus saved him from its perils."

"One, Sheikh 'Abdul Haq, who is his well-wisher, has related that a week before his death the Khwājā said that he had come to know the truth for certainty. The experience of Unity (*Tawhīd*) is like a narrow lane while the wide road he frequented earlier was something else, but of late he had attained the knowledge with certitude."[1]

Again in the same letter he writes:

"Myself and a few others with the Khwājā were on this way of existentialist monism and we had a lot of ecstatic experiences in its support until God in His mercy advanced us from that stage to the stage He wanted us to attain."

The possibility of mistake in the knowledge acquired through intellect as well as mystical practices is elucidated by him in one of his letters replying to the following question:

"The intellect is, by itself, undoubtedly, incomplete and limited to conceive God, yet, can it not after purification and enlightenment develop harmony

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1. *Maktubāt Imām Rabbānī*, Letter No. 43, p. 59.

and communion with the abstract Reality? Would not purification enable it to comprehend His Being, thus dispensing with the need of prophethood which has to depend on angels?"

This enunciates the stand taken by mysticism. Now hear the answer from one who has had ecstatic experience of mystic 'purification' and 'enlightenment'.

"The intellect tries to develop that harmony and concord, but, inhabiting, as it does, in the human body, it cannot cast off its concomitances absolutely, nor can it become completely abstract. Doubt always assails it, imagination never leaves it, anger and passion are ever on its side and greed and lust are its companions. To err and forget are human and never part with it; to turn back or to loose its way are always possible. Therefore intellect is not dependable and the discoveries made by it are never free from doubt, imagination, error or forgetfulness. As against it, angels are free from these characteristics and are undefiled by physical weaknesses. Thus we have no other course but to depend on revelation brought by them; for, this is unsoiled by suspicion, imagination, mistake or forgetfulness. Sometimes one feels that the enlightenment he has had was got mixed up with the impure perceptions acquired through doubt or imagination, even though it could not be discovered at that time. On subsequent occasions, too, the enlightenment sometimes bestows this discrimination but often withholds it. Thus it is manifestly clear that the knowledge gained through that source is likely to be unreliable and absolutely

undependable."[1]

In fact, as Sheikh Mujaddid says neither intellect nor spiritual enlightenment is wholly free from imperfections of humans perceptions and extraneous impressions. The environment, beliefs, traditions, and legends which have solidly established themselves amongst the peoples of any mystic get reflected in his ecstatic experiences. This is the reason why certain mystics catch glimpses of Greek and Egyptian legends and superstitions in their ecstatic experiences or beatific visions. Even Muslim mystics often visualise certain phantoms of Grecian traditions; they sometimes have a vision of personified intellect and meet or even embrace or talk to logos.

Now, if we concede that there is an additional sensory medium, the question arises as to what are its perceptions and cognitions? Perhaps not more than this: a trip to the celestial realm, free movement in time and space, cognition of a new world and its wonders, vision of certain figures and colours, and, finally, a conception of the tremendous space of universe and the craftsmanship of its Creator. But as Sheikh Mujaddid says all this amounts to no more than amusement and sport, He says:

> "Is there any paucity of visual and auditive impressions that one should yearn for spiritual visions and songs through meditation and penance. These sensory perceptions and those spiritual impressions are both created by God and are symbols of His

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1. *Maktubāt-Imām Rabbānī*, Vol. I, Letter No. 266, pp. 112-118, Mujaddadi Press, 1329 A. H.

creative genius. The light of the Sun and Moon that we witness in this terrestrial world is preferable for various reasons to the imagery of allegorical world. But since this perception is permanent and common to all and sundry, we do not appreciate it and long for the momentary visions of the celestial world—water that runs beneath one's foot gets polluted."[1]

Now, how far spiritual enlightenment and illumination solves the original and fundamental issues which could not be answered by sensory perceptions, intellect or philosophy? The purpose underlying the creation of universe and the transcendental scale of moral code is as much beyond the sphere of mysticism as it is of intellect and philosophy. This is why mystics have always remained aligned to one of the religious, spiritual or moral orders of their age and could not by themselves evolve any positive religious or moral system.

The place of Sheikh Mujaddid among the mystics of Islam is well known. But he followed the exoteric path in mysticism and his adherence to the *Shariah* and the *Sunnah*—the perennial fountainheads of Islam—is no secret.

Before I come to the last and unfailing source for solving the questions raised in the beginning, which, to me, is revelation through the prophets of God, and present before you an outline of the socio-ethical order that emerges through its teachings, I think it proper to mention the civilizations that owe their existence to the concepts of sensory perceptions, intellect and mysticism.

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1. *Maktubāt Imām Rabbānī*, Vol. I, Letter No. 209.

CHAPTER THREE

The Three Civilizations

I

MATERIALISTIC CIVILIZATION

THE social order founded on sensory perceptions and its cognitions is the oldest and most popular. No social order is more satisfying; none so easy to evolve and so readily acceptable to the majority of men in all climes and at all times. It has such an attraction for the masses that its roots need not go deep into the soil, nor is it necessary to raise the level of human intelligence or make any sacrifice for its sake. History bears witness to the fact that no social order has so persistently come to have its sway on humanity as it has done.

Any civilization based on senses will invariably possess the following distinguishing features:

Undue Reliance on Senses

It will deny every thing which cannot be perceived through sensory organs. As a consequence, there will be

no faith in any power or being which may be imperceptible to the senses and thus inconceivable by the intellect. Without faith in such a power, obviously, there is no question of any fear or hope arising out of it. Even if paganish cults with numerous gods sometimes do exist concurrently with it owing to age-old beliefs and superstitions which die hard, there is hardly any noticeable impact on the intellectual atmosphere created by materialism, as the former never comes into conflict with the materialistic view-point and utilitarian outlook of life and moral behaviour.

Where sensory impressions are a necessary condition for the acceptance of any existence, there is obviously no room for recognition of any reality beyond the reach of human perception for these cannot be perceived by means of sensorial reactions. Denial of the Hereafter and life after death, or, in other words, of telefinalist morality, follows as a logical conclusion of such an approach, if only because these can be accepted on the basis of evidences other than those furnished by the sensory impressions. Further, the denial of life after death must of necessity make the terrestrial world and life in it an end in itself. Divine retribution has no place in life which, again, is driven to libertarian conduct undaunted by transitory laws and rules of social morality. Just as the senses do not perceive the life after death, they furnish an irrefutable evidence that death is the end of life. As a logical development of this idea, the demand for making the best of the present life becomes unassailable, rationally and intellectually, and all efforts are directed only to make life more comfortable. The conclusion thus arrived

at by the sensist intellect is, indeed, reasonable and correct.

During the initial stages of a materialistic civilization (sometimes even in later stages too) the impulse behind human behaviour is not abstract morality but self-interest. As this civilization progresses, social needs make it necessary to take recourse to certain moral concepts but these too are generally based on epicurean ideals. In other words, the objective remains pleasure and sensual enjoyment. In a more developed stage the ideal changes from pleasure to utility i.e. the moral code of the society aims at the greatest good of the greatest number but pleasure and sensual enjoyment continues to play a dominant role in the determination of utility.

Utilitarian Outlook

Another feature of the sensist and materialistic civilization, in fact a supplementary trait of the one described above, is the preference given to immediate benefit over ultimate gain, owing to proximity of the former to sensory cognition. Preference of the immediate gain requires little thought to be given in deciding any issue. This is the reason why materialistic civilization manifests a peculiar shallowness and ostentation, and its social behaviour is marked by individualism, selfishness and profit-motive.

A natural outcome of such a mentality is exaltation of material gains over principles, morals and faith. Howsoever lofty principles or ideologies, ethical or moral codes and articles of faith or belief may be there, they can be jettisoned at the altar of meanest profit and smallest gain. Persons acquiring such an outlook of life and attitude of

behaviour are always ready to compromise with every system ; they exhibit a wonderful capacity of adaptability according to changed circumstances. They can mould themselves with greater ease than a man made of wax. They can work for any ideology, fight under any flag and die or kill for any cause provided they have something to gain ; no matter whether the profit to be had is negligible, or even doubtful. This attitude often develops into a national outlook but in every case its message remains: Go with the time, if the time goes hard for you.

Man—A Social Animal

The sensist civilization accords recognition to sensory organs as the sole media for acquiring knowledge. The sensory perceptions, as already stated, indicate nothing beyond the fact that man is physiologically an animal, albeit of a higher species. It, therefore, goes back to animalism—the gestures dictated by its perceptions—looking forward to the animal for finding the lost chains of human history, the secrets of human behaviour, attitudes and instincts ; and prescribes norms of conduct, as it should, animalised in spirit and content for human beings.

The recurrence of the words 'sensist' and 'animal' should not cause any misunderstanding that a sensist civilization implies a primitive form of social existence bereft of cultural attainments and civilized institutions. In fact I call it sensist because of its origin and spirit even though it is the most developed and sophisticated social order. Under the sensist civilization life is enriched, made comfortable and attractive, and all the available material resources are mobilised for inventions and

improvements designed to make life easier to an extent, larger than under civilizations springing from intellectual or revelatory ideologies. No other civilization can, indeed, lay a greater claim to material welfare and advancement because this form of civilization is furnished with all the sinews of material progress.

Material progress

The world has at times seen phenomenal progress achieved by this civilization. It has turned barren lands into gardens, constructed canals over mountains, raised magnificent buildings and produced such monuments of human skill and ingenuity that one is apt to regard it as an intellectual civilization. Still, the fact remains that it conquers intellect solely for sensual and materialistic comforts.

Denial of God

Adites[1] of ancient Arabia were once the greatest exponents of sensist-materialistic civilization. Their culture was the most advanced of that Age and exhibited

1. Adites were an Arab people, flourishing in the south of the Arabian peninsula, with their dominion extending over Yaman, Babylon, Syria and, for a time, even Egypt. Their kings are mentioned in the *Diwān* of the *Hudhailities* and their prudence in that of *Nabigha.* (Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. I, p. 121). Another authority is of the opinion that the Amalekites, spoken of in the old Testament, and the Hyksos rulers of Egypt were Adites (cf. *Ard-ul-Qur'ān*, Azamgarh, 1955, pp. 132-62). Adites were worshippers of idols. They created disorder and vanquished their neighbours (al-Suyūti, *al-Durrul-Manthūr* Cairo, 1314 A H., Vol. III, p. 95). (Translator).

numerous features of sensism. The way of their life was marked by denial of God and the life after death. They constructed palatial buildings, sometimes unnecessarily, merely for ostenation, fame and wordly glory. Their love for life and of the world had taken possession of their soul to such an extent that they considered their nation to be immortal. Their wars were such a display of tyrannical power as if they had placed themselves beyond the bounds of creaturelines and denied the control of a Divine power over them.

The Prophet of Adites, Hūd (peace be upon him), addressed them thus:

> "Build ye on every high place a monument for vain delight?
>
> And seek ye out strongholds, that haply ye may last for ever?
>
> And if ye seize by force, seize ye as tyrants"?
>
> (*Shu'arā* : 128-30)

Their successors, Thamudites,[1] were also so pre-occupied with the persuits of worldly life and its comforts

1. Thamudites were in occupation of the Northern and Western part of Arabia which was called Wadi al-Qura. Thamudites were mentioned as still existing by Diodorus Siculus and Ptolemy; and they survived down to the fifth century A. D. in the corps of equites Thamūdevi attached to the army of Byzantine emperors. (Nicholson's Literary History of the Arabs, p. 3). They had built up a splendid civilization and acquired great skill in architecture, specially in the carving out of mountains to build residential palaces. According to Hitti, Sargon II (722-705 B. C.) the conqueror of Charchemish and Samaria subjugated the tribes of Thamūd and deported them to Samaria (P. K. Hitti, A History of the Arabs, New York, 1960 p. 37) (Translator).

that it was clearly visible that they had lost all faith in everything imperceptible to their senses. Their Prophet, Salih (peace be upon him), told them :

> "Will ye be left secure in that which is here before us,
> in gardens and water-springs,
> And tilled fields and heavy-sheathed palm trees,
> Though ye hew out dwellings in the mountain, being
> skilful"?

(*Shuʿarā*: 146-9)

Idol worship

Sensism, materialism and animism go together. The religious instinct of the nations accepting sensism and materialism finds expression in idol worship; for, those steeped in sensist outlook, attitude and approach towards everything find it extremely difficult to conceive a God that cannot be concretised, seen or brought before them as a symbol for meditation. They create material demi-gods to satisfy the innate divine instinct and thus materialise or sensify the spiritous in them like other phases of their life.

Prophet Abraham[1] (peace be upon him) was born in

1. Abraham of the Bible and Qurʾān was the great Prophet and patriarch. His dates of birth and death according to the computation by Sir Charles Marston are 2160 B. C. and 1985 B. C. respectively. According to the Bible his age was 175 years. He was born at Chaldea and later migrated to Syria and Palestine. He is regarded as the common progenitor of the Arabs and the Israelites Idolatry and star-worship prevailed among the people among whom Abraham was born, but he raised the banner of Monotheism, later acclaimed by Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Translator).

a nation which had gone far ahead in idol worship on its path of materialistic civilization. Al-Qur'ān says of them :

> "Recite unto them the story of Abraham :
> When he said unto his father and his folk :
> What worship ye ?
> They said : We worship idols, and are ever devoted unto them.
> He said : Do they hear you when ye cry ?
> Or do they benefit or harm you ?
> They said : Nay, but we found our fathers acting on this wise.
> He said : See now that which ye worship,
> Ye and your fore-fathers !
> Lo ! they are (all) an enemy unto me, save the Lord of the Worlds,
> Who created me, and He doth guide me,
> And Who feedeth me and watereth me.
> And when I sicken, then He healeth me.
> And Who causeth me to die, then giveth me life (again).
> And Who, I ardently hope, will forgive me my sin on the Day of Judgement".

(*Shuᶜarā* : 69-82)

Perversion of human nature

Increasing emphasis on materialism and sensism, and the exaltation of sensual desires and their satisfaction over moral precepts result into perversion of human nature. The good sense becomes dormant and moral responsibility recedes into insignificance. Human nature degenerates to a level which is shameful even for the

beast. Prophet Lūt[1] (peace be upon him) was born amongst a people who had reached the same depth of moral degradation. He said to his people :

"What! of all creatures do ye come unto the males,
And leave the wives your Lord created for you?
Nay but ye are froward folk".

(*Shuᶜarā*: 165-6)

"For come ye not in unto males, and cut ye not the road (for travellers), and commit ye not abomination in your meetings?

(*Ankabūt*: 29)

Profiteering

The covetous desire to exact the maximum of profit is a natural outcome of utilitarian mentality. This motive, by its very nature, is incapable of making any distinction between lawful and unlawful gains and prefers personal benefit over that of the community irrespective of the evil effects following in the wake of adopting such a

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1. The people of Prophet Lūt lived in the region of Kikkar in the Jordon valley which was an extremely fertile land and full of exuberant vegetation. These people revelled in homo-sexual practice. Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible (Vol. IV, p. 559) says: The wickedness of the Sodomites appears to have been so heinous and debasing as to have become proverbial. The term "Sodomite" is used in the Scripture to describe offences against the laws of nature which were frequently connected with idolatrous practices."

The account of Prophet Lūt in the Qur'ān is, however, free from the shameful features mentioned in the Biblical narrative (Translator).

course. Deceit, dishonesty and other malpractices become the secrets of trade.

Midianites[1] were adept traders, well-versed in all these malpractices of the profession. Their Prophet demanded of them :

"Give full measure, and be not of those
Who give less (than the due).
And weigh with the true balance.
Wrong not makind in their goods, and do not evil, making mischief, in the earth".

(*Shuʿarā* : 181-3)

Moral confusion under Roman Empire

Egypt, Syria, Iran and Greece have been centres of materialistic civilization in different periods of history. The natural corollaries of sensist-materialism found full expression at different times in each of these countries.

The Roman civilization was, however, a masterpiece of sensist-materialistic culture. Sensism regulated its moral behaviour and ethical code while materialistic outlook informed the thought and attitude of its citizens and

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1. Midianites lived in the neighbourhood of Moabites, extending from the Gulf of Akaba down to the eastern shore of Red Sea covering about two hundred miles in length. Their Prophet Shuʿaib, is identified by some with Jethro of the Bible. *Moghair Shuʿaib*, a city situated on the Red Sea coast of Arabia, south-east of Mount Sinai, exists to this day to mark the city of Prophet Shuʿaib (peace be on him).

Baʿal worship was common among the Midianites, and female chastity was a rare phenomenon among them. They were a trading people addicted to commercial malpractices. (Translator).

determined the objectives of social life. Its thought, philosophy, social outlook and intellectual precepts survived not only numerous revolutions and the ups-and-downs of kingdoms and empires but still animates the modern western civilization. John William Draper depicts a picture of social and moral confusion prevailing during the glorious age of Roman Empire in these words:

> "When the empire in a military and political sense had reached its culmination, in a religious and social aspect it had attained its height of immorality. It had become thoroughly epicurean; its maxim was, that life should be made a feast, that virtue is only the seasoning of pleasure, and temperance the means of prolonging it. Dining-rooms glittering with gold and incrusted with gems, slaves in superb apparel, the fascinations of female society where all the women were dissolute, magnificent baths, theatres, gladiators, such were the objects of Roman desire. The conquerors of the world had discovered that the only thing worth worshipping is Force. By it all things might be secured, all that toil and trade had laboriously obtained. The confiscation of goods and lands, the taxation of provinces, were the reward of successful warfare; and the emperor was the symbol of force. There was a social splendour, but it was the phosphorescent corruption of the ancient Mediterranean World."[1]

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1. History of the Conflict between Religion and Science: John William Draper, London (1910), p. 36.

Arabian age of Ignorance

The Arabian Age of Ignorance[1] prior to the advent of Islam in the seventh Century A. D., was a purely sensist-materialistic age in thought and attitude, social and moral behaviour. It had no concept of the life after death: it had been assumed that the alternation of day and night within the orbit of time and space, heaven and earth, provided the cause behind everything that took place; and that no super-human or super-natural agency had any power to break this chain of automation. Al-Qur'ān says about these people:

> "There is naught but our life of the world; we die and we live, and we shall not be raised (again).
>
> (*Mominūn*: 37)
>
> "And they say: There is naught but our life of the world; we die and we live, and naught destroyeth us save time." (*Jāthia*: 24)

A poet of that age, Shaddākh bin Yᶜamar-al-Kanᶜānī,[2] employs the same argument to exhort his tribe to war against another. He asks: "Why be cowards if you have to die like your enemy?" His argument is an example of the sensist way of thinking and the psychology ot its adherents:

> "Yea, fight ye tribe of Khozāᶜah with your enemies
> and don't be cowards.
> Thy adversaries, like ye, have hair on their heads;
> Shall they come to life, once dead?"

1. The Age of Ignorance stands for the era of pagan past in Arabia, before the advent of Islam. It was so named because of the sensist-materialistic overtones of its culture.

2. *Hamasa, Bab-ul-Hamasa.*

Purely materialistic and epicurean attitude of life emerges as a logical inference of the denial of the Hereafter and this can be noticed in the Arabian Age of Ignorance too. They thought that one has to die in any case, then why waste this brief sojourn on earth by denying sensual gratification or the satisfaction of carnal desires; for, won't it be better to die contented than to live in want? Another poet of that Age of Ignorance, Tarafa bin al-Abad, epitomises the same concept in these verses:"[1]

> "O thou, who censurest me for engaging in combats and pursuing pleasures, wilt thou, if I avoid them, insure me immortality?
>
> If thou art unable to repel the stroke of death, allow me, before it comes, to enjoy the good, which I possess.
>
> A man of my generous spirits drinks his full draught today; and tomorrow, when we are dead, it will be known, which of us has not quenched his thirst".

In a purely sensist and materialistic age the other object of life—a bit higher than comfort and luxury—is achievement of fame and honour, display of power, courage and manliness. Indeed, an intellect steeped in materialism cannot think of anything nobler. These aspirations find expression in the following lines[2] by Tarafa:

> "Save only for three things in which noble youth take delight.

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1. *Sabᶜa-i-Moᶜalaqa, Moᶜalaqa Tarafa bin al-ᶜAbad.*
2. *Ibid.*

I care not how soon rises over me the coronach loud:
Wine that foams when the watar is poured on it, ruddy, not bright,
Dark wine that I quaff stol'n away from the cavilling crowd;
And then my fierce charge to the rescue on back of a mare.
Wide-stepping as wolf, I have startled where thirsty he cowers;
And third, the day-long with a lass in her tent of goat's hair,
To hear the wild rain and beguile of their slowness the hours".

Ideas like these give birth to a peculiar philosophy of ignorance, for, not even uncivilized and unlettered people can maintain a semblance of social coherence without a philosophy—a view of life in entirety. Like other branches of its iearning, arts and sciences, the philosophy of ignorance does not go deep, it is content to draw inference from the exterior and to adopt the concrete and present in preference to the ultimate and unseen. Ideas, thoughts and emotions expressed by the poets of such an age expound its philosophic view of life. This is more so in the case of Arabian Age of Ignorance wherein poetry was the only compass of its wisdom. These thoughts, sometimes depicting a truth, are not without the innate spirit and instinct of the age in which they were born. In one of his poems[1] Tarafa holds that after death,

1. *Sabᶜa-i-Moᶜalaqa, Moᶜalaqa Tarafa bin al-Abad.*

prudence and indifference become indistinguishable. He points to the graves of two persons, one extremely cautious and the other frivolous, and says that both have been reduced to dust. The miser and prodigal are here merely symbolic, thereby covering the entire field of human behaviour.

"To my eyes the grave of the niggardly who's mean with his money,
Is one with the wastrel's who's squandered his substance in idleness;
All you can see is a couple of heaps of dust, and on them,
Slabs of granite, flat stones piled shoulder to shoulder."

With these psychological traits at the base, the social life under ignorance develops a peculiar ethical code suited to its genius. In such societies, unless historical circumstances give birth to effeminate tendencies, manliness, valour, fights and forays bulk large in the life of the people. War is considered a necessity in itself, people constantly remain at feud for trifles, even if no purpose is to be achieved through it. Sometimes when they have no enemy to fight, they attack their own allies to satisfy their lust for strife and bloodshed. An Arab poet, Qatāmī, expresses this master-passion of those days in these words:

"And we attack our brethren Banū Bakar, when
Amongst the brothers and allies we have to fight none."

The instinct to wage war for its own sake, or, merely for the display of war-like prowess of any people is an

impulse of ignorance, and it very often takes hold of the sensist societies. A poet of Ignorance expresses his savage joy over the fury of war which he hopes to blaze when his horse is able to carry him on its back[1]:

"When my young, ruddy colt is grown up for ride,
May God inflame, between tribes, the flaming furnace of fight;
A fire flaming, that consumes every one, and spares none."

The cooperation and alliance in an age of ignorance is never imbued with the principles of equity; nor is it bound by the limitations of just and unjust, right and wrong, permitted and forbidden or the like. Instead, a partisan spirit lies at the back of all transactions of peace and amity. Never paying any heed to the call or the object for which its help is sought, the materialistic civilizations only look to the person giving the call or seeking its help. This sentiment has found a beautiful expression in a verse by an Arab poet[2] who says:

"Help thy brother, whether he be oppressor or the oppressed."

Again, the poet says:

"In oppression, if I help not my brother,
What help can I, when he is oppressed, render?"

I have indicated the features of sensist-materialistic civilization in some detail for it has almost always been the dominant, widespread and most popular social order of the world.

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1. *Hamasa, Bab-ul-Hamasa.*
2. Jandab bin Ambar first used the phrase, as mentioned by Hafiz Ibn Hajar in *Fath-ul-Bari.*

II

INTELLECTUAL CIVILIZATION

We do not find in the annals of history any civilization which can be called intellectual, in which nothing was ever accepted unless weighed in the scale of reason or commended by human intellect. If such a civilization were to come into existence it would make life an ordeal and would not perhaps last for more than a few days. As a western writer has well said :

> "Man is by far more stupid in his actions than prudent".

It would thus not be correct to claim that reason alone can become the base of culture and its ramifications. In fact, ideas and thoughts, beliefs and superstitions, habits, customs and usages come into existence first, before any thought is given to them ; thereafter intellect comes to discriminate, accept or reject them, and not unoften it so happens that the intellect assumes the role of an advocate and defender of the existing usages. What reasons were not conceived by the Grecian intellect to vindicate female lewdness and prostitution ? No act of human brutality and savagery can rival gladiatorial sports, but, did Roman intellectuals' sophistry not try to prove it inoffensive ? Was not Arabian custom of infanticide and suttee in India rationlised by the intellectual pundits of these countries ? Nevertheless, these sophistries and rationalisations could neither alter the realities nor intellectualise these customs or the civilizations which produced them.

Even philosophy cannot claim to be completely free from irrational traits much less to prefer such a claim on behalf of culture or social order.

Greek philosophy is commonly regarded as the essence of speculative thought but quite a large portion of it was drawn from Grecian mythology and superstitions. Even Aristotle and Plato, with all their claims to free-thought, could not deliver their precepts from the confines of their environment and accepted many an illogical notion of the day.

Materialism in intellectual civilization

Civilizations commonly accepted as intellectual and scientific at the first glance, if subjected to a closer scrutiny, would none-the-less be found to be essentially sensist and materialistic. Among such social orders the present civilization of the West has been the most deceptive, thanks to its crafty propagandists; for, it is regarded as the most scientific and intellectual civilization man has ever known. It was, however, an offspring of the revolt of sensism and pragmatism against the intellectual movement, and its achievements comprise a decisive victory of matter over intellect, senses over spirit and experience over faith. European philosophers, scholars, social scientists and ethicists began their crusade against intellectualism in the seventeenth century. They declared that anything which cannot be experimented, measured, weighed or counted is not acceptable, and, abiding by the same standard, believed that nothing is moral if it has no utility. They sought a rational elaboration of pure perception in order to propound a new theory of

cosmology completely divorced of a transcendental, superhuman and metaphysical reality. They denied every power save matter and motion and dubbed the spiritual explanation of cosmic phenomena as essentially irrational and untenable. They propounded the theory of mechanical or natural causation which, in their view, was the only intelligible and scientific explanation of the cosmic order. Every other explanation, thought and discourse was rejected as irrational or unscientific with the result that gradually pragmatism, natural selection and utilitarianism came to have its sway over the entire field of human life. The new doctrine thus animated the entire human existence, leaving not untouched its remotest corner—the recesses of mind and heart—and accepted utility and pragmatic experience as the cornerstone of social, ethical, economic and political life.

It is undoubtedly correct that the terms "intellect" and "nature" have been used to a far greater extent in the European literature than in other literary compositions of the world. These works have had a magical effect and are still readily acceptable to the western mind but if one were to explore their meanings and examine their application to human life, he would find that intellect stands for animal intellect (if it can be so named); an intellect bound by perceptions and experiences and rejecting everything imperceptible as irrational and unreal. A philosopher of the fifteenth century, Leonardo da Vinci, expounded this view in unambiguous terms. Leonardo's view has been thus expressed by Herold Hoffdring in his History of Modern Philosophy.

"....................the results of our knowledge can

only acquire perfect certainty by means of the employment of mathematics. Wisdom is the daughter of experience and it is, therefore, also a product of time. Leonardo rejects all speculations which find no confirmation in experience, the common mother of all sciences".[1]

Human nature thus construed is not different from the nature of the beast; for, it becomes devoid of sublime instincts, moral consciousness, nobleness of heart and intellectual virtue. It is weary of all restraints over its freedom and demands complete mastery over itself in order to satisfy the appetites of flesh ; to eat, drink and amuse itself without any intervention from any quarter. The context in which the word "nature" is more often used in western literature leaves no doubt that it does not stand for aught but animal instinct.

Sensist thought and empirical sciences had evolved a hazy concept of social animal for the human being. The European age of materialistic reasoning has unfolded this concept into a perfect and logical postulate of materialism which, since accepted as an article of faith, permeates the intellect and soul of the man, and renders it propitious for him to attain conformity with his true nature i. e. his ancestral instincts.

Epicurean ideals

As a consequence, natural and inevitable, as it should be, pleasure and enjoyment became the ultimate

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1. Dr. Herold Hoffdring : A History of Modern Philosophy, London (1924), p. 165.

object or ideal of human iife. An Arab poet of the Age of Ignorance beautifully renders the same sentiment in these words :

> "He is a generous fellow, one that soaks himself in wine ;
> You will know tomorrow, when we're dead, where the world exists".

Another poet expressed the same idea when he said: "Enjoy life for it is bestowed only once", but, the oriental symbolism and idiomatic expression being unsuited to the Occidental frankness, the latter spelt out this view unambiguously in the well-known maxim : "Eat, Drink and be Merry ere ye die tomorrow."

This materialistic view-point and selfish disposition pervades all spheres of human life, as, for example, in economics it turns to capitalism, in politics to imperialism. In attitude and thought it chooses between two opposing systems, that which it finds easier, perceptible and nearer to its sensist leanings, as, for instance, its choice fell to the limited geographical and racial nationalism which, being nearer to sensism, is more attractive even though a social order with an ideological or religious base is prone to be universal and more wide-based. Indeed, it could have never conceived of the whole world as the birth-place of human beings and, accordingly, it accepted the narrower concept of nationalism in preference to a broader view of humanism. With the gradual attenuation of religion in the West, nationalism established itself as if these were two sides of the same scale—one rose to the extent the other went down.

The contemporary literature of Europe, no doubt,

exhibits a keen interest in spiritualism but it would be erroneous to suppose that this literature interprets any spiritual movement aiming at the purification of heart or moral refinement; since, the object of these compositions is simply development of certain latent human faculties for the display of wondrous and startling feats. It is treated as an art, or, rather as a science like mesmerism, having nothing to do with the betterment of human morals or the elevation of soul.

Western materialism

The whole of Europe has, indeed, not renounced religion. A greater part of it still professes Christianity; Church services are attended on Sundays, Christian rites and functions are held with considerable pomp and show in the whole of Europe, many traces of Christian traditions are still visible, yet, the religion of Europe is nothing but materialism.

A right thinking European Muslim analyses the modern materialistic life of Europe in these words:

> "The average Occidental—be he a Democrat or a Fascist, a Capitalist or a Bolshevik, a manual worker or an intellectual-knows only one positive "religion", and that is the worship of material progress, the belief that there is no other goal in life than to make that very life continually easier or, as the current expression goes, "independent of Nature". The temples of this "religion" are the gigantic factories, cinemas, chemical laboratories, dancing halls, hydro-electric works; and its priests are bankers, engineers, film stars, captains of industry, record airmen. The

unavoidable result of this craving after power and pleasure is the creation of hostile groups armed to the teeth and determined to destroy each other whenever and wherever their respective interests come to clash. And on the cultural side the result is the creation of a human type whose morality is confined to the questions of practical utility alone, and whose highest criterion of good and evil is material success.

In the profound transformation the social life of the West is undergoing at present, that new, utilitarian morality becomes daily more and more apparent. All virtues having a direct bearing upon the material welfare of society—for example, technical efficiency, patriotism, nationalist group-sense—are being exalted and often absurdly exaggerated in their value ; while virtues which, until recently, were valued from a purely ethical point of view, as, for example, filial love or sexual fidelity, rapidly lose their importance—because they do not confer a tangible, material benefit upon society. The age in which the insistence on strong family bonds was decisive for the well-being of the group or the clan is being superseded, in the modern West, by an age of collective organisation under far wider headings. And in a society which is essentially technological and is being organised, at a rapidly increasing pace, on purely mechanical lines the behaviour of a son towards his father is of no great social importance so long as those individuals behave within the limits of general decency imposed by the society on the intercourse between its members. Consequently, the

Western father daily loses more and more authority over his son and quite logically the son loses his respect for the father. Their mutual relations are being slowly overruled and—for all practical purposes—made obsolete by the postulates of mechanised society which has a tendency to abolish all privileges of one individual over another, and—in the logical development of this idea—also the privileges due to family relationship."[1]

III

MYSTICAL CIVILIZATION

Mysticism is an antithesis of sensism and materialism. It seeks annihilation of the matter and mortification of the body just as sensism denies existence of soul and its ramifications : the former attacks the body and flesh which, in its view, being the seats of sin, have to be chastened. Asceticism conceives the soul as a bird imprisoned within the cage of human frame, fettered and obstructed from taking wings to the regions, sublime and divine. In its view the soul cannot establish communion with the Ultimate Reality, the fountain-head of its own existence,

1. M. Asad : Islam at the Crossroads, Arafat Publications, Lahore (1963), pp. 55-58.

unless the fetters are broken and soul rendered capable of free movement towards its soul.

Porphyry (233-304) the second greatest exponent of Neo-Platonism holds that the aim of his school of thought is union or immediacy with death; for, the death severs body from soul and thus achieves the ultimate end of life. Another expounder of this school considers pleasure to be the greatest calamity for mankind. In his view it is because of pleasure that soul develops an attachment and concern for the body, weakens its divine content, forgets reality and takes after the ways of the flesh. But the doors of philosophic comprehension are opened only to the pure and unmixed intellect after mortifying the senses. Flesh misleads the soul and so long as soul remains entangled with the matter, it can never penetrate the ultimate and abiding reality.

All those religious and moral orders which had been influenced by asceticism had prescribed self-annihilation, celibacy and repression of sensual pleasures as an essential ingredient of their moral disciplines.

It had become a cardinal-principle of these systems that the body and soul were discordant elements which could never unite. Naturally, they considered it propitious for man to ignore and annihilate the body for the sake of his soul.

Consequences of monasticism

Asceticism inevitably generates a wilful apathy towards the body and its needs. Not unoften it ignites such a passion against the body as if it were a stumbling-block in the way of human progress. For it the world

becomes an abode of evil, life a dead-weight and social relations a snare. Clearly, such a concept of life cuts at the very root of social existence—it can destroy but not build. Sensism and spiritualism are, no doubt, at the opposite ends of the same pole but there is a difference between the two: one can easily create and sustain a social order of its own but the other cannot bring forth any cultural pattern of civilized social existence even for a short while anywhere in the world.

A logical development of asceticism was that those who accepted this creed became sensists and materialists in their wordly affairs. They had to compromise between their spiritual demands and the needs of the flesh; they were mystics in the monasteries but indulgent materialists on the stage of politics. The world has witnessed many examples of the kind. Ashoka was a devoted and fervent Buddhist, and, at the same time, a successful ruler and a ruthless conqueror. When the Roman Emperor, Constantine, embraced Christianity which had by then degenerated into a mystical and ascetic cult, he had to adopt the same duality. He tried to bring about a fusion of Christian spiritualism with the ignorant and materialistic paganism of his predecessors. Such a synthesis is simply an impossibility and whenever any civilization begins to draw inspiration from a spiritual cult, decay inevitably sets in; whereafter either that civilization, culture or nation is effaced from the stage of history, or, if any vitality to defend itself is still left in it, a strong reaction sets in against decadent spiritualism culminating eventually in the victory of sensuous materialism—naked, uncompromising and revengeful—which cannot tolerate

spiritualism in any form. This is what had happened in Europe. Christianity had then turned into an ascetic order—to a certain extent more than any other mystic order—first, owing to the impact of Neo-Platonic mystical cults and, secondly, because of the false and misleading interpretation of the Scriptures by the misguided and ignorant clergy who presented Christianity as an unnatural mysticism. Marriage was considered a sin, women a worldly scourge, relationship with the fair sex an impediment in the way of spiritual development; such were the accepted norms of the faith. Learned theologians openly preached celibacy and illustrious monks and priests took pride in abducting children from their homes in order to train them in far off desert monasteries. Numerous examples of hideous and atrocious self-torture then practised by Christian saints and monks have been cited by Lecky[1] : how the monks lived in caves abandoned by wild beasts, dried up wells and graveyards, donned tunics of long hair, crawled on all fours like animals, ate grass, remained standing on one foot for years together; such was the sickly state of the Age which had numbed humanity and paralysed civilization in the medieval Europe.

Fanatical asceticism, monstrous and cruel, as it was, inundated the whole of Christendom and shook the very foundations of its civilization ; the population of Europe began to deplete quickly, disease, death and famine ravaged the land frequently, knowledge and learning

1. W. E. H. Lecky : The History of European Morals, New York, 1855, p. 13.

perished, cities wasted away, means of sustenance became scarce, and the entire Christian World was encompassed by ignorance, barbarism and darkness so much so that the Medieval Ages in Europe became a Dark Age.

The reaction against this tyrannical gloom of decadent civilization was inevitable but not unnatural. While spiritualism and monasticism were finally thrown overboard in the nineteenth century, modern Europe hastened to materialism as irresistibly as a straving man falls on the food. The materialism of Europe was the revenge of suffering humanity against the atrocities that it had to undergo for centuries together at the hands of Christian clergy and monks. But it was another aberration of human nature and nobody can say which of the two would be more crushing, monstrous and ruthless for the humanity. It is also difficult to predict when a reaction against the present brutal materialism and its attendant concept of mechanical casuation will set in and where will it end.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Other Source of Knowledge

I

PROPHETHOOD

What is the outcome of discussion we have had so far? It is that none of the fundamental questions facing man can be answered by his senses, intellect, mystic experience or any other latent faculty. Man's efforts to solve these problems through these sources have proved futile; and, whenever he has evolved a social order wholly on the foundations of human experience, the structure raised by him has shown defects which could never be removed.

But should we be content with the negative conclusion we have arrived at or resolve that there is really no answer to these questions?

But, when we see the universe, its commanding space, grandeur, superb craftsmanship and organic unity, and the all-pervasive law and coherence that run through it, from the tiniest speck of dust to the magnificent galaxies of stars, it becomes difficult to presume that this whole system came into existence by itself or that it is without a Ruler or a purpose, and will automatically destroy itself.

Similarly, we see man and the elaborate arrangements made to provide the means for his sustenance, to meet his manifest as well as hidden needs, from his birth till death, the abundance of these bounties on earth, the pivotal place seemingly occupied by him in the cosmic order, and the guidance of nature available to him at every turn and pass All these make it extremely irrational to suppose that the life of man on earth has no purpose or that he is a creation of the same order as insects and beasts, left without any guidance in regard to the most fundamental and vital problems of his conscience and that he has not been endowed with the means to fulfil his paramount spiritual needs.

And then, we again cast a glance over the universe and find that it is complete—not in fragments but in totality as well. The component parts of the universe make a complete whole in which nothing can be substituted for another. Human psyche and his physiological order must therefore, depend on a similar perfect and joint operation of his body and soul.

Now, we are nearer the point where we must accept the inadequacy of our own capabilities to find an answer to the fundamental issues of human consciousness ; and, at the same time, we are prepared to recognise the necessity of Divine guidance for solving these problems. We cannot insist that every human being has been endowed with this faculty, for, this would be against the way of God and the nature of our universe.

II

THE PROPHETS OF GOD

We know of men who had claimed that they could provide us with guidance from the Lord of the world. They claimed that the Creator and Sustainer of the universe had given them insight into the secrets of His creation and opened the doors of a new world before their eyes. They claimed to see this hidden realm whenever their God was pleased to let them see it, like the terrestrial world everyone of us witnesses with his eyes. These persons claimed to be intermediaries between man and God; since, they claimed to know the will of the Creater, His likes and dislikes through the knowledge and revelation transmitted to them by God Himself. This is the group of persons whom we call Prophets.

Distinguishing Features of Prophethood

Of these persons we know that—

(i) Their moral conduct is above reproach, in nature and disposition they are noble and generous and in every affair their attitude is always that of truthfulness, straightforwardness and generosity. Not a single instance of their speaking a lie or deceiving anybody can be found.

> "I dwelt among you a whole lifetime before it (came to me)."
>
> (*Yūnus*: 16)

(ii) Their intellect is sound and well balanced, their decisions are dictated by wisdom, caution and prudence and they are never found guilty of an act which may cast a doubt about their mental health and intellectual capabilities.

> "Thou art not, for thy Lord's favour unto thee, a madman."
>
> (*Al-Qalam* : 2)

> "Say (unto them, O' Muhammad) : I exhort you unto one thing only :
>
> That ye awake, for Allah's sake, by twos and singly, and then reflect :
>
> There is no madness in your comrade."
>
> (*As-Saba* : 45)

(iii) Save in the affair for which they press their claim, they are like other persons, never claiming any distinction or mastery in other wordly affairs.

> "Say : I am only a mortal like you."
>
> (*Al-Kah'f* : 110)

> "We sent not before thee (any messengers) : save men whom We inspired from among the folk of the townships."
>
> (*Yūsuf* : 109)

(iv) What they preach about the extra-physical world is not derived from the knowledge currently available to the people of their times ; in fact, they are very often not conversant with the sciences of their age nor do they use the technical terms of the approved systems of speculative thought. On the other hand, their expression is simple, direct and easy of comprehension ; they state plainly whatever their heart feels and in whatever manner it

grasps the reality.

"This is of the tidings of the Unseen which We inspire in thee (Muhammad) :

Thou thyself knewest it not, nor did thy folk (knew it) before this."

(*Hūd* : 49)

"And thou (O Muhammad) wast not a reader of any scripture before it,

Not didst thou write it with thy right hand,

For then might those have doubted, who follow falsehood."

(*Al-Ankabūt* : 48)

"Nor doth he speak of (his own) desire.

It is naught save an inspiration that is inspired,

which one of mighty powers hath taught him."

(*An-Najm* : 3-5)

"Say (O Muhammad) : It is not for me to change it of my own accord.

I only follow that which is inspired in me."

(*Yūnus* : 15)

(v) They do not claim prophethood till they are sufficiently advanced in age. Before that neither others expect such a claim to be made by them nor can it be predicted from their own utterances or actions. In fact, they do not themselves know that they would one day be elevated to prophethood.

"Say : If Allah had so willed I should not have recited it to you nor would He have made it known to you."

(*Yūnus* : 16)

"Thou hadst no hope that the Scripture would be

inspired in thee; but it is a mercy from thy Lord."

(*Al-Qasas*: 86)

(vi) They surpass others in moral excellence from their childhood and are always a model of virtue and righteousness.

"And we verily gave Abraham of old his proper course, and We were aware of him."

(*Al-Anbiya*: 51)

"Allah knoweth best with whom to place His message."

(*Al-An'ām*: 124)

(vii) Unlike the knowledge of other ephemeral sciences and arts, the knowledge of reality is not acquired by the prophets gradually over a period through deliberate effort; it dawns on them all at once and does not undergo a change with the advancing age and intellect.

"Will they not then ponder on the Qur'an? If it had been from other than Allah they would have found therein much incongruity."

(*An-Nisa'*: 82)

(viii) The prophets have knowledge of Reality with a oracular guarantee of truth and certitude unparalleled by the discoveries of senses and intellect. Such Realities are to them personal perceptions beyond doubt or contention.

"Say: This is my Way: I call on Allah with sure knowledge."

(*Yūsuf*: 108)

"Say: I am (relying) on clear proof from my Lord".

(*Al-An'ām*: 57)

(ix) Save the Supreme Reality which, being beyond

the ken of human perception, cannot be adequately comprised by speculative thought, whatever else they want to be accepted as a fundamental truth is fully supported by reason. Intellect whole-heartedly commends their teachings and we find immense wisdom in them. They present a well-knit order of morals, worship, social relations, politics and the like which cannot be excelled even by the experts in those fields. The world has in fact not witnessed a social order better than that taught by the prophets. The purpose for which they are raised is :

"......And to teach them the Scripture and wisdom".
(*Al-Jum*^{c}*ah* : 2)

(x) All those persons who accept the message of any prophet and follow that which he ordains, become vastly superior to their contemporaries in moral conduct, disposition and behaviour. Moral qualities like charity, goodness, truthfulness, chastity, humility and sincerity become the hall mark of their character It is significant that these qualities are not to be found in the upholders of other puritan orders.

(xi) The prophets never claim to wield any power over the forces of nature nor do they claim to have an answer to every question. They await revelation from God for enlightenment. It is also not within their powers to obtain a revelation of their liking at their sweet will Sometimes the revelation is against what they had desired or done, and it may even admonish them or counsel against the wishes of the prophet.

"Say (O Muhammad, to the disbelievers) :
I say not unto you (that) I possess the treasures of

Allah,
nor that I have knowledge of the Unseen ;
and I say not unto you : Lo ! I am an angel.
I follow only that which is inspired in me.
Say : Are the blind men and the seer equal ?
Will ye not then take thought ?"

(*Al-An'ām* : 50)

"We have seen thee turning thy face to heaven (for guidance, O Muhammad)".

(*Al-Baqarah* : 144)

"O Prophet : Why bannest thou that which Allah hath made lawful for three, seeking to please thy wives ?

And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful".

(*At-Tahrīm*-1)

(xii) The prophets are in close communion with the Almighty whose succour would always appear to be available to them. Sometimes supernatural phenomenon would appear to establish the truth of their message. Such a phenomenon against the natural law of causation, or a miracle as it is commonly called, cannot be explained away by reason except as the will of God. The prophets, however, never claim to possess any control over such miracles nor do they cause them to occur simply on demand from others or of their own will.

"And they say : Why are not portents sent down upon him from his Lord ?

Say : Portents are with Allah only, and I am but a plain warner".

(*Al-Ankabūt* : 50)

"......And it was not (given) to any messenger

that he should bring a portent save by Allah's leave. For everything there is a time prescribed".

(*Ar-R'ad* : 38)

These are the distinguishing features of the prophets of God which furnish a convincing proof of the truthfulness of their message but their own character and moral conduct is, above all, the most trustworthy evidence of their fidelity. Their unblemished character is a continuous miracle of miracles which inculcates faith in the hearts of the people..

The evidence next in importance is the Scripture or the message brought by a prophet. It is a living miracle for it contains innumerable miracles, verbal and solid, explicit and hidden, subjective and objective for all time to come.

Now let us see if there is anything irrational in the appointment of a man as a prophet of God for revealing His message, scriptures and ordinances to other human beings ? Does it not stand to reason or is it unintelligible ?

Prophethood : Its Nature and Necessity

Is it beyond the powers of God or against His nature and laws to send a messenger ? Obviously it is not so. The question would not arise at all if we accept His omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. On the contrary rejection of prophethood amounts to negation of these attributes of God Almighty. It would have been against His justice and mercy to have left human beings groping in the blind valley of doubt and speculation unattended by any guidance from Him. Then, is

prophethood against the ways of God and the evidence of recorded history ? Is it not a historical fact that a large number of prophets were raised at the nook and turn of every age and in almost all nations and countries of any importance ? Reason could never furnish any convincing proof against them. The prophets did always have manifest signs, proofs and evidences in support of their claim but their adversaries could never bring forth any evidence against them except empty arguments.

Again, is prophethood against sensory perceptions and its experiences ? No doubt our senses and the impressions gained through them do not help us to discover the reality of prophethood but even these provide us a means to probe into its reality. Take the impressions of sensory reaction stored in the warehouse of memory. At first we did not have them and some of these were not even possessed by our ancestors but we acquired them through instruction or experience. Likewise the prophets obtain divine knowledge through the means suited for acquiring the knowledge they claim to possess.

These are the three questions which have been answered by al-Qurʾān in this verse :

> "And they measure not the power of Allah, its true measure when they say :
>
> Allah hath naught revealed unto a human being, Say (unto the Jews who speak thus) :
>
> Who revealed the Book which Moses brought, a light and guidance for mankind,
>
> which ye have put on parchments which ye show, but ye hide much (thereof),

and (by which) ye were taught that which ye knew not yourselves nor (did) your fathers (know it)?

Say: Allah: Then leave them to their play of cavilling.

(*Al-An'ām*-91)

This verse first explains that in fact the denial of prophethood is symptomatic of the unawareness of God's attributes. Anyone who has the slightest idea of God's qualities of sustenance, mercy and justice and has also the knowledge of providential concern that God has for His creation from the very inception of human career on earth, will not deny prophethood; for, it is the finest expression of His mercy and an unmistakable sign of His justice. Thereafter the verse goes on to point out a well known precedent by putting the question: "Who revealed the Book that Moses brought?" It then brings forth an argument based on human perception and experience, i. e. the knowledge which is acquired after a state of ignorance but is unfathomable and limitless. intellect should, therefore, have no difficulty in discerning prophethood and its signs, even if it may not be possible for everyone to reach its majestic heights. Therefore, one cannot do but trust the prophets and follow them.

The exalted place occupied by a prophet and the difference between a prophet and other individuals has been clearly illustrated in a parable by the Prophet of Islam. It is such a simple and pithy, yet, wonderfully comprehensive allegory as will not be found even in the teachings of other prophets.

One day the Prophet went to Mount Safa and called out the Meccans as if the enemy was about to attack them. When the Meccans had gathered there leaving their work, he asked. "How have you found me till now ?"

They answered : "We have always known you to be truthful and just".

In this way the Prophet first brought home an important pre-requisite of prophethood that before anybody claims to be a prophet there should be a general consensus about the nobility of his disposition, truthfulness and trustworthiness.

After this verification of his own character the Prophet said : "If I tell you that there is an army at the back of the hill, waiting to attack you, would you believe me ?"

Arabs were illiterate but not devoid of common sense. They knew that they were standing in the valley. The back of the hill was not before their eyes, and if a man who had never spoken a lie was standing on the summit, commanding a view of both the sides and giving some news, then there was no reason to disbelieve him.

They said : "Yes, we shall believe you, for you are one without a blemish, truthful and trustworthy, and you are at present standing on the summit of the hill".

"Then I warn you from a severe agony from God (which you do not see)", said the Prophet, "that is about to befall you".

It was in fact a parable told in the best way possible by the Prophet. It also illustrates that anybody who

cannot reach the summit of prophethood has no right to deny the knowledge revealed to a prophet, simply on account of his own ignorance, lack of similar experience or simply conjecture. One can only deny his own knowledge of that reality or his inability to perceive it himself. Ibn Taymiyah (1263-1328) has well-said that there is great difference between "know-nothing" and a knowledge of "nothingness with certitude", and, so far as knowledge itself is concerned, a prophet has obviously the infallible source of acquiring knowledge.

When persons not possessing an insight into the secrets of prophethood contend with the prophet about the knowledge received by him through revelation and personal perception of unseen realities, his answer is :

> "Dispute ye with me concerning Allah
> when He hath guided me ?"
>
> (*Al-An'ām* : 80)

The prophet cannot show to others what he has himself witnessed nor can he transmit the certitude of reality within the reach of his cognition. He explains his inability to do so in these words of Al-Qur'ān :

> "He said : O my people ! Bethink you, if I rely on a clear proof from my Lord and there hath come unto me a mercy from His presence, and it hath been made obscure to you, can we compel you to accept it when ye are averse thereto ?"
>
> (*Hūd* : 28)

The intellect of persons even if quite sound in body and min d fails to apprehend the knowledge bestowed on prophets :

"Nay, but doth their knowledge reach to the Hereafter? Nay, for they are in doubt concerning it. Nay, for they cannot see it".

(*An-Namal*: 66)

"They know only some appearance of the life of the world, and are heedless of the Hereafter".

(*Ar-Rūm*: 7)

If such persons controvert prophetic knowledge, their arguments are based on mere conjectures instead of knowledge or cognition of Reality:

"And they have no knowledge thereof.

They follow but a guess, and lo! a guess can never take the place of the truth".

(*An-Najm*: 28)

III

MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS

Now we shall briefly survey the knowledge imparted by the prophets about God, His attributes, His creation, the interrelation between God and Universe, the alpha and omega of the cosmos, its reality, purpose of man's life on earh, in short, the apocalyptic world-view and eschatology; the foundation that these teachings provide for the edifice of civilization and the type of socio-ethical structure raised thereon.

It is to be noted that unlike the maze of differing theories and contradictory postulates put forth by the philosophers and mystics, the message of prophets has always been one and the same ; there is no incompatibility or discrepancy in their teachings. It would have been better to quote here from other scriptures too besides Al-Qur'an, but since most of these have either been lost or manipulated, as their historical criticism has already demonstrated, not enough material is to be found on each one of these topics in these scriptures. I would, therefore, present extracts only from Al-Qur'an which is the last of the Divine scriptures and repository of all that was revealed in the previous books.

Universe and its Creator

(i) Attributes of God and His faculties :

"He is Allah, than whom there is no other God, the knower of the invisible and the visible.

He is the beneficent, the Merciful.

He is Allah, than Whom there is no other God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy one, Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb.

Glorified be Allah from all that they ascribe as partner (Unto Him).

He is Allah, the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner.

His are the most beautiful names.

All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise."

(*Al-Hashr* : 22-24)

(ii) Creation of the World and its management:

"Lo! Your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, then mounted He the Throne.

He covereth the night with the day, which is in haste to follow it, and hath made the sun and the moon and the stars subservient by His command.

His verily is all creation and commandment.

Blessed be Allah, the Lord of Worlds!"

(*Al-A*ᶜ*rāf*: 54)

(iii) The kingdom of God and His Powers:

"Say (unto them, O Muhammad):

Who provideth for you from the sky and the earth, or Who owneth hearing and sight; and Who bringeth forth the living from the dead and bringeth forth the dead from the living; and Who directeth the course? They will say: Allah.

Then say: Will ye not then keep your duty (unto Him)?"

(*Yūnus*: 31)

"Say: Unto Whom (belongeth) the earth and whosoever is therein, if ye have knowledge?

They will say: Unto Allah.

Say: Will ye not then remember?

Say: Who is Lord of the seven heavens, and Lord of the Tremendous Throne?

They will say: Unto Allah (All that belongeth).

Say: will ye not then keep duty (unto Him)?

Say: in Whose hand is the dominion over all things and He protecteth, while against Him there is no protection, if ye have knowledge?

They will say: Unto Allah (all that belongeth).
Say: How then are ye bewitched"?

(*Al-Mūminūn* : 84-89)

"Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth, and religion is His for ever.
Will ye then fear any other than Allah?"

(*An-Nahl* : 52)

"Seek they other than the religion of Allah, when unto Him submitteth whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and unto Him they will be returned."

(*Al-e-Imrān* : 83)

(iv) The World has not been created in vain nor is it without any purpose or utility:

"And We created not the heaven and the earth and all that is between them in vain."

(*As-Sad* : 27)

"Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and (in) the difference of night and day are tokens (of His Sovereignty) for men of understanding.

Such as remember Allah, standing, sitting, and reclining, and consider the creation of the heavens and the earth, (and say):

Our Lord! Thou createdst not this in vain.
Glory be to Thee!"

(*Al-e-Imrān* : 190-1)

(v) Life of Man is neither aimless nor is he independent:

"Thinketh man that he is to be left aimless?"

(*Al-Qiyāmah* : 36)

"Deemed ye then that We had created you for

naught, and that ye would not be returned unto Us ?"

(*Al-Mūminūn* : 115)

(vi) The purpose of life and death is the trial of man:

"Who hath created life and death that He may try which of you is best in conduct;

and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving."

(*Al-Mulk* : 2)

"Then We appointed you viceroys in the earth after them, that We might see how ye behave."

(*Yūnus* ; 14)

(vii) Pleasures of earthly life are but a trial:

"Lo! We have placed all that is on earth as an ornament thereof that We may try them: which of them is best in conduct." (*Al-Kahf*: 7)

(viii) Man is the best of Divine creation:

"Verily We have honoured the Children of Adam.

We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment."

(*Banī Israel* : 70)

"Surely We created man of the best stature."

(*At-Tīn* : 4)

(ix) Man is the vicegerent of God on earth:

"And When Thy Lord said unto the angels:

Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth."

(*Al-Baqarah* : 30)

(x) Man is a trustee of whatever has been created by God:

"Believe in Allah and His messenger, and spend

of that whereof He hath made you trustees ; and such of you as believe and spend (aright), theirs will be a great reward."

(*Al-Hadīd* : 7)

(xi) Everything on earth has been created for man alone :

"He it is who created for you all that is in the earth."

(*Al-Baqarah* : 29)

(xii) Man has been created to worship God :

"I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me.

I seek no livelihood from them, nor do I ask that they should feed Me."

(*Adh-Dhariyāt* : 56-57)

(xiii) The bounties of God are to be utilised by man :

"Say : Who hath forbidden the adornment of Allah which He hath brought forth for His bondsmen, and the good things of His providing ?

Say : Such, on the day of Resurrection, will be only for those who believed during the life of the World."

(*Al-Aᶜarāf* : 32)

(xix) Sin is not proper enjoyment of life but lavishness :

"O Children of Adam ! Look to your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink but be not prodigal.

Lo ! He loveth not the prodigals."

(*Al-Aᶜarāf* : 31)

(xv) All human beings belong to the same progeny

and honour is for virtuous only:

"O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another.

Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct.

Lo! Allah is knower, Aware."

(*Al-Hujurāt*: 13)

The Life After Death

(i) There is a life after death wherein the conduct of earthly life will be adjudged finally and Impartially:

"Lo! Unto Us is their return.

And Ours their reckoning."

(*Al-Ghashiyah*: 25-26)

"Unto Him is the return of all of you; it is a promise of Allah in truth.

Lo! He produceth creation, then reproduceth it, that He may reward those who believe and do good works with equity."

(*Yūnus*: 4)

"And We set a just balance for the Day of Resurrection so that no soul is wronged in aught.

Though it be of the weight of a grain of mustard seed; We bring it. And We suffice for reckoners."

(*Al-Anbiya*: 47)

"And whoso doeth good an atom's weight will see it then, And whoso doeth ill an atom's weight will see it theh."

(*Az-Zilzāl* 7-8)

(ii) Life in this World is finite while that after death

is eternal:

> "This life of the world is but a pastime and a game.
>
> Lo! the Home of the Hereafter—that is life, if they but knew."
>
> (*Al-Ankabūt*: 64)

(iii) Those who excel in goodness and do not spread corruption on earth shall be rewarded a goodly reward:

> "As for the abode of the Hereafter We assign it unto those who seek not oppression in the earth, nor yet corruption.
>
> The sequel is for those who ward off (evil)."
>
> (*Al-Qasas* :83)

IV

CONSEQUENCES OF PROPHETIC TEACHINGS—CHARACTERISTICS OF ISLAMIC WAY OF LIFE

These are the absolute and unalterable realities in regard to the Creator of the Universe, Cosmic order, man and his ultimate end which have been made known to humanity through the prophets. The pattern of intellectual, social, moral, economic and political order moulded in accordance with these concepts can be as easily predicted as an agronomist can tell about the plant, leaves, flowers and fruits by merely looking at any particular seed. Like a physician who knows the effects of a

given medicine, those who have an insight into the innate relationship between the cosmic concept and eschatology of any people, on the one hand, and the attitude, approach and direction of their social and moral life on the other, can easily sketch the outlines of civilization envisaged through prophetic teachings.

The difference between the concepts, sensate, intellectual and mystic, on the one hand, and revelatory, on the other, and their respective civilizations is too obvious to be mentioned here in detail. Similarly it need not be pointed out that the difference lies in the respective precepts as much as in their accomplishments. The difference in two plants, their leaves and fruits, is inherent in their seed and never diminishes but goes on to increase as the plants grow. Likewise two civilizations born of conflicting ideologies cannot produce similar results. But if you come across any resemblance between two civilizations branching out of two different concepts, then either there has been a mistake in identifying their origin or one concept has been incised into another enabling it to manifest two separate traits simultaneously. This has often happened with the revelatory civilization too—it was often grafted with sensist or spiritualistic cultures. It was not unoften that after *Khilāfat-e-Rāshida* (632-661), the right-guided Caliphate, ignorance, kingship, Iranian spiritualism, Grecian thought or other materialistic or sensist systems were grafted into the body-politic of Islam. This complex admixture is what is commonly known as Islamic civilization or culture and very often Muslim historians and authors take a pride in it.

Islamic culture, as commonly conceived, comprises prevalent art, architecture, music and literature in the heyday of Damascus, Bagdad, Cordova, Granada, Isfahan, Samarkand, Delhi and Lucknow; magnificent palaces and castles built by Muslim Emperors and the sophisticated life of these centres of the medieval Muslim world are often proudly cited as its achievements. Many of these accomplishments were, however, against the spirit of Islam, as, for example, construction of unnecessary palatial buildings and costly monuments at the cost of public exchequer, simply for ostentation and exhibition of the might and splendour of the Emperors, or, the encouragement of certain arts given to luxurious and prodigal living of the then aristocracy were definitely un-Islamic. The various traits of what we collectively call "Islamic culture" would not have come into existence but for the assimilation of the Hellenistic, Iranian and other un-Islamic thoughts and ideas, and as such, these really represent the culture of certain races which had accepted Islam as a faith but could not faithfully live up to its teachings.

However, if the transplantation of two differing systems could be avoided and both allowed to develop independently, like two species of plants, they are not likely to exhibit any similarity except that both would be social orders and their members would be human beings.

Such systems will derive inspiration from different sources; their moral and intellectual precepts will differ from each other, nay, one may even be antithesis of the other. Concepts, ideas and circumstances congenial to the development of revelatory culture would stifle a sensist-materialistic culture; attitude and behaviour

considered derogatory or shameful by the former would be regarded as laudable by the latter—what is a life giving nectar for one will be poison for the other.

Now let us closely examine the essential ingredients of a revelatory civilization and see their effect on the social life and ethical behaviour of man.

Compatibility of Human and Universal Purposiveness

It starts from the premise that the universe is neither a kingdom without a ruler nor administered by a host of demi-gods, but, by a Lord of the Worlds, Creator and Sustainer, to Whom belongs whatever exists; for, He is the ultimate cause, His writ runs supreme, nothing happens without His Will or knowledge, the entire universe submits to His Will and follows whatever has been ordained by Him—and, therefore, man, a creation endowed with free-will, should also willingly submit to the Supreme Authority.

The concept of universal overlordship is far reaching because it attributes a homogeneity between the conceptual world and the thought, attitude and behaviour of man. The psychic, moral and spiritual realms of human life concord with the scientific truths of the physical order of cosmos. Rational and intuitive efforts blend to provide a fusion of human life and universal purposiveness of creation thus making both of them meaningful.

Dr. Herald Hoffding, a German historian-cum-philosopher, accepts the superiority of religion over philosophy in this respect. In his "History of Modern Philosophy" he says :—

"The theology of a monotheistic religion is based

on the fundamental thought that there is one single cause of all things. Apart from the grave difficulties which this thought involves, it has the important and valuable effect of accustoming men to abstract from differences and details and of preparing them for the acceptance of an interconnecting link of all things according to law. The unity of the cause must lead to the unity of the law. The Middle Ages educated men to this thought, to which the natural man, overpowered by the manifoldness of phenomena and inclined to polytheism, does not feel himself drawn. It denotes, at the same time, a preparation for the conception of the world determined by science. For all science strives to reduce phenomena to as few principles as possible, even if it must admit that the thought of one single highest law is an unattainable ideal."[1]

Moral Responsibility

Accountability before God is the spiritual dynamic that exercises a profound influence on the attitude and behaviour of an individual. The concept of human independence which is the fundamental cause of his deviating from the path of righteousness, is eschewed giving place to a sense of responsibility. One ceases to consider his own capabilities and the gifts of nature bestowed on him as subservient to his own will and desire. He begins to regard them as a valuable trust endowed by God and fears to use them for any purpose that may be construed against

1. History of Modern Philosophy, p. 5

the ultimate purpose of the Universe and the will of its Creator. In other words man begins to consider himself morally responsible to the Sovereign of the Universe and willingly responds to His Call for obedience.

The purposiveness of the world and the dependence of man on God are in the last analysis, the determinant of the worth of life itself. In its roots lies the concept of responsibility and worthiness of human existence. Any one who accepts this concept will treat his life as a valuable trust of which every moment is precious, not to be wasted in pursuit of pleasure or gay abandon, but, to be utilised for preparation of the eternal life in the Hereafter. For the world becomes a testing place and life a trial instead of a resort for pleasure and recreation for such a person, he does not lose his soul in amusement and frolics. Every step of such a man is well considered as he never takes a decision in a lighter mood. ᶜAbdullāh-bin-ᶜAbbās once described Caliph ᶜUmar as a watchful bird which was afraid of traps lying on every path.

The belief that the terrestrial life is transitory and of the Hereafter eternal, acts as a deterrent to epicurean ideals. Success no longer depends merely on material welfare as this is essentially shortlived. Ethical considerations overrule the purely utilitarian ones as the criterion for judgement of vice and virtue changes——the prime importance being given to the eternal recompence rather than immediate benefit. The life in this world no longer remains an end in itself but a transitory stage for a higher, fuller and abiding existence in the Hereafter.

Righteous and Temperate Life

Such persons will obviously never absurdly exaggerate the values of material welfare nor turn the world into hostile groups in their craze after power and pleasure. While being rulers and administrators they would lead a life so temperate and chaste as would be envied by the saints and ascetics.

The simple life led by Caliph ʿUmar-ibn-al-Khattāb (634-644) is too well-known. Whenever anybody invited him to a sumptuous feast he would say: "I fear that on the Day of Judgement I might be told: Ye squandered your good things in the life of the world and sought comfort therein.'"[1] If rich food was ever brought before him he would ask if every Muslim has had the same food. He would never touch that food as the reply was in negative.

An account of the royal journey of Caliph ʿUmar, the conqueror of Jerusalem, has been preserved by historians. With a lonely camel, bare-headed, without any luggage and donning a wornout shirt; such was the journey undertaken by the ruler of the then mightiest empire of the world.

Caliph Muʿāwiyah (661-680) once asked Dherar bin Dhamurah, a companion of Caliph ʿAli ibn-Abī-Tālib, (656-661) to narrate something about the latter. Dherar first asked to be excused but when Caliph Muʿāwiyah insisted, he said :—

> "He (ʿAli) was always timorous of the world and its pleasures; the night and its darkness were

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1. *Al-Ahqaf*: 20

pleasing to him. His eyes were more often filled with tears and he always appeared to be care-worn. He liked to wear garments made of rough cloth and to partake coarse food, lived like a commoner and made no distinction between him and others. Whenever we asked anything, he would reply; whenever we went to him, he would salute first; and whenever we invited him, he would come ungrudgingly; but, despite this nearness, his awe never permitted us to talk in his presence or join in his conversation. He respected the pious and loved the poor, powerful could never hope to achieve any undeserved gain from him, nor, the weak gave up hope of obtaining justice from him. By God, I have seen him often after the night-fall standing on his prayer mat, holding his beard and weeping as if he were asking the world to leave him high and dry and give up all hopes of enticing him away to its pleasures. I could visualise him saying thus: O World, thy pleasures are transitory, thy life short, thy allurements unreliable and dangerous while I have to cover an arduous, long and extremely perilous path."[1]

Honesty and Trustworthiness

The firm belief in God and the Hereafter, and the conviction that every action of man will be adjudged by the Omniscient Lord himself, creates a sense of responsibility which cannot be expressed in words, for it has no equivalent in the human expression. A few incidents

1. Ibn-e-Jawzi: *Safwat-us-Safwah*, Hyderabad, 1355 A.H., Vol. I, p. 122

narrated here might give an inkling of the moral attitude and behaviour born out of such a faith.

Caliph ᶜUmar used to say; "My rule is not a whit more than this that three persons set out on a journey and one of them is asked to act as a manager and defray the travel expenses." Often he said :[1] I am like the guardian of an orphan who has to meet his own expenses but is permitted to spend on his necessities, if need arises, from the wealth of his ward."

Once he was marking the camels of *Bait-ul-Mal*[2] in the burning summer sun. Someone remarked that this task could have been entrusted to a slave. Caliph ᶜUmar replied ; "Who is more a slave than myself."[3]

He often said : "I would be accountable before God even if a kid died on the bank of Euphrates."[4]

Caliph ᶜUmar bin-ᶜAbdul ᶜAziz (ᶜUmar II, 717-720) was so cautious that he never obtained hot water from the public kitchen and if he had ever to take it, he would immediately pay for it. He would never use the candle lighted for official purposes for his personal work and if anyone coming to him for official business began a discussion about ᶜUmar's personal affairs, he would put off the candle and ask for his own lamp to be brought in.[5]

Caliph ᶜUmar II was the ruler of the mightiest empire

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1. Ibn-e-Jawzi : *Sirat-e-ʿUmar-ibn-al-Khattāb*, Azhar, 1931, p. 140
2. *Lit.* "The House of Property". The public treasury of a Islamic State, which the ruler is not allowed to use for his personal expenses, but only for the public good.
4. Muhammad-bin-ʿAbdul-Hukm : *Sirat-e-ᶜUmar-bin-ᶜAbdul Aziz,* p. 140
3. *Ibid.,* p. 140
5. *Ibid.,* p. 44

of his day extending over the territories of bygone Byzantine and Iranian empires alongwith Arabia and a few other countries. Once, when he was talking to his children he noticed that they cupped their mouths with their hands while replying to him. On asking the reason for it the nurse told him that since the children had taken pulses and raw onions, which alone were available in the house of the Caliph on that day, they cupped their mouths lest its smell offended him. With tears in his eyes, ᶜUmar said: "My child, would you like to have sumptuous food and your father to be consigned to Hell ?"[1]

Dignity of Man

The sense of responsibility in such persons would never allow them to sink to the level of beasts nor could they be cruel or harsh in their treatment of fellow-beings. They would never allow exploitation of others for their personal ends, nay, they would not tolerate a treatment which is derogatory to any human being.

Equality

The son of ᶜAmr-bin-al ᶜAas, the governor of Egypt, once slapped a Copt[2], when he had raced ahead on his mare saying: "By God, my horse is faster than yours." When the complaint was brought before Caliph ᶜUmar, he asked both ᶜAmr-bin-al ᶜAas and his son to present themselves before him. He ordered the son of ᶜAmr to be beaten by the Copt which he did so severely that the son

1. Muhammad-bin-'Abdul-Hukm : *Strai-e-'Umar-bin-'Abdul Aziz*, p. 55
2. The native Christians of Egypt (Translator)

of ʿAmr was badly injured. Thereafter Caliph ʿUmar asked the Copt to touch the whip to the head of ʿAmr because it was only on account of ʿAmr's vanity that his son had dared to beat another man. Then, addressing ʿAmr he said: "Whence did ye make slaves of these people who had been born free from the wombs of their mothers."[1]

This was the only social order brought into existence since the beginning of the social existence of man on this planet which could claim to have its roots in moral precepts and an ethical ideology. In this society the criterion for nobility was neither race nor riches but moral virtue and awe of God. It did not discriminate between men on grounds of race, colour, or country nor did it bestow honour on those who could afford to live ostentatiously. It held in esteem only those who were better in faith and virtuous in conduct.

Once the leaders of Quraish[2] including Suhail bin ʿAmr and Abū Sūfyān[3] came to see Caliph ʿUmar. In the meantime some emancipated slaves also arrived alongwith Suhaib[4] and Bilāl.[5] The Caliph called in Suhaib and Bilāl first leaving others to wait outside. On this

1. *Op. cit.* pp. 86-87
2. The tribe settled at Mecca from which Prophet Muhammad was descended, and of which his grandfather, ʿAbul Muttalib was the chief. (Translator).
3. Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad
4. Companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad
5. An honoured and distinguished companion of Prophet Muhammad who was appointed first *Muʿazzin* or caller to prayer. He was an Abyssinian slave who had been ransomed by Abu Bakr (Translator).

Abū Sūfyan remarked: "See! It's a will of God that Suhaib and Bilāl are called in by the Caliph while we are left to wait outside."

Suhail replied: "Friends, why be angry over it, for, this is because of our own mistake. The call of Islam was for everyone but while we continued to ignore it, these persons had responded to the call. We kept sitting earlier, so we have to wait today; but, what will you do when these persons will be called up on the day of Requital and we shall be left behind?"

The Quraishi leaders mentioned of this talk to Caliph ᶜUmar and asked him if there was no way to remedy the past. He pointed out towards Syria and said: "Go and take part in the war going on there."[1]

Pensions and stipends sanctioned by Caliph ᶜUmar were also disbursed on the same principle. Those who had made a greater sacrifice for the sake of Islam got a larger share than those who had embraced Islam afterwards.

When during the course of his journey to Syria, Caliph ᶜUmar's attention was drawn by Abū ᶜUbaida towards his patched shirt and he was asked to change it, he replied: "Abū ᶜUbaida, it would have been better if I had not heard it from you. There was none more renegade, lowly and disgraced than us in the whole world. God bestowed honour on us through Islam. Now, if you want honour through any thing else, God will again disgrace you."[2] On his death bed Caliph ᶜUmar expressed the wish that if

1. *Cit. op.* p. 85
2. *Al-Bidāya Wan-Nihāya, Ibn Kathir*

Salīm (the emancipated slave of Abū Hūzaifa) were alive he would have nominated him as his successor.

Bilāl was an emancipated Ethopian slave. Asking his brother to be accepted in marriage by a respectable Ansār family, he said: "I am Bilāl, an emancipated Ethopian slave and this is my brother. If you accept him for marriage in your family, let us perform it in the name of Allah. But, if you refuse, Allah is Great and Mighty." His request was gladly accepted by the Ansārs.

Thereafter the brother of Bilāl said: "What was the occasion of mentioning your antecedents?"

"You were accepted by the Ansārs," Bilāl replied, "Only because of my truthfulness."[1]

Unimpaired Justice

Unlike a sensist-materialistic civilization, revelatory civilization has its roots in an ideology based on ethical precepts which is of fundamental importance and cannot be bartered away for the sake of worldly gains. The votaries of this ideology, who hold aloft the banner of justice and fairplay, can never give up what is right and just for the sake of anyone, friend or foe, nor can they discriminate between human beings on the basis of race, country, colour, language, kinship, or the like.

> "O ye who believe!
>
> Be steadfast witnesses for Allah in equity, and let not hatred of any people seduce you that ye deal not justly.
>
> Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty.

1. *Tabqāt-i-Ibn-i-Saad*

Observe your duty to Allah.
Lo ! Allah is Informed of what ye do."

(*Al-Ma'idah* : 8)

The alliances and friendships entered into by such a people are never without bounds; for, they can help others in virtue and justice alone.

"........... but help ye one another unto righteousness and pious duty.

Help not one another unto sin and transgression, but keep your duty to Allah."

(*Al-Ma'idah* : 2)

It was on account of these precepts and teachings that when once the Prophet said: "Help thy brother, whether he be the oppressor or the oppressed," his companions could not restrain themselves. They asked: "O Prophet of God, verily, we ought to help an oppressed brother but how should we help if he be oppressor"?

"Stop him from oppression," the Prophet replied, "for this is a help unto the oppressor."[1]

The Prophet of Islam declared in unequivocal terms:

"He is not of us who gives a call in the cause of partisanship; he is not of us who dies in the cause of partisanship; and he is not of us who fights in the cause of partisanship."[2]

When one of the companions requested the Prophet to elucidate what he exactly meant by "partisanship", the Prophet replied:

"(It means) your helping your own people in an

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1. *Bukhāri* and *Muslim*, on the authority of Anas
2. *Abū Dā'ūd*, on the authority of Jubayr Ibn Mut'im

unjust cause."[1]

Teere is no place for any partisan spirit under this social order; nor for favouritism to any tribe, clan, nation or party. Islam enjoins that everyone should uphold justice in preference to his own or his family, class or national interest. Partisanship, or, *ᶜasabiyyah,* as the Muslim jurists call it, is unanimously held to be forbidden by *shariah*, and, a major sin which makes one liable to be declared as an unreliable witness for purposes of tendering evidence in a court of law.

Imām Shāfaᶜi[2] elucidating the juristic view in regard to partisanship says:

> "Anybody who gives a call for partisanship and rakes up a faction on that ground shall be declared an unreliable witness even though his call does not lead to hostility between different groups. This is so because he commits an act which is prohibited by Islam and, as far as I know, none among the Muslim *Ulama* has dissented from his view. All human

1. *Ibid.*, on the authority of Wāthilah ibn al-Aqsa
2. Muhammad ibn-Idris al-Shāfaᶜī (767-820), theologian and jurist, was founder of one of the four orthodox schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Born in Palestine, he spent his childhood in Makkah, and was a pupil of the reputed religious scholar Mālik ibn-Anas. He developed his own system of canon law which is followed in lower Egypt, parts of Palestine, Western and Southern Arabia and the East Indies. The most important of al-Shāfaᶜi's works is a collection of his writings and lectures known under the title of *Kitāb-ul-Umm.* Al-Shāfaᶜī maintained the infallibility of an unanimous agreement within the Muslim community at a given time (*Ijmᶜa*), as against the individual juristic opinion. (Translator).

beings are God's bondsmen and no one can be deprived of this fundamental right. One who is more devoted to God deserves to be loved and respected more by his fellow beings. And, amongst those who submit themselves to the commandment of God, those who serve the community, such as, Caliphs, *Cadis*, *Ulama* or those who are ever willing to help all and sundry deserve to be given honour; for, their obedience to the Almighty and service to the community is a means of spreading these virtues amongst others. Thus, one who is foremost in obedience and service is to be given preference over another who lacks one of these qualities. Allah has established equality amongst human beings through Islam, and, therefore, Islam alone deserves to be a cause of love and affection between different peoples. However, if anyone is sympathetic towards his own clan or tribe but harbours no ill-will or feeling of estrangement against others solely on account of his attachment to his own people, this should not be taken as partisanship but a tenderness for those who are near and dear to him. Every individual possesses certain traits which are liked by some and disliked by others but what is objectionable is that for the sake of some body whom one adores, he should be unfair to another or hate anybody on account of family, race or class, or, unite the people against someone whom he dislikes. One can, undoubtedly, detest a criminal or hate a mischiefmonger and a tyrant but to nurse a feeling of antipathy because the other belongs to a certain family, tribe or race is *asabiyyah*, which

would render him an unjust, unreliable and untrustworthy person. The reason for this dictum is the pronouncement of God declaring 'every Muslim as a brother unto another,' while the Prophet has said that: 'O' bondmen of Allah, be ye brothers unto one another'. There is thus no justification for committing a prohibited act and a crime like arousing the spirit of *asabiyyah* by sowing the seeds of dissention and disruption in the fraternity of Islam. This is a crime which would render the criminal liable to be declared an unreliable person whose evidence should not be acceptable to a court of law."[1]

The establishment of justice for all sections of society, irrespective of the real or supposed interest of any class, group or nation is to be regarded as the ultimate objective of the social message of Islam.

The characteristics of such a society are described thus by al-Qurᶜān:

> And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends one of another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, and they establish worship and they pay the poor-due, and they obey Allah and his messenger."
>
> (*At-Taubah* : 71)

The Middle Path

The revelatory social order has no place for asceticism or monasticism. Annihilation of the self is strictly forbidden, self-torture, celibacy, living in seclusion away

1. Al-Shāfeᶜi : *Kitābul-Umm.*, I Edition, 1324 A. H., (Egypt), pp. 211-12

from society, unnatural penance and similar practices are foreign to it and looked at with disfavour. Qurʿān clearly lays down that:

> "Say: Who hath forbidden the adornment of Allah which He hath brought forth for His bondmen, and the good things of His providing?"
>
> (*Al-Aʾrāf*: 32)

> "O children of Adam! Look to your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but be not prodigal.
>
> Lo! He loveth not the prodigals."
>
> (*Al-Aʿrāf*: 31)

And the Prophet of Islam has ordained that:

> "Allah has bestowed on us a religion, easy and upright, in place of monasticism.[1]
>
> There is no celibacy in Islam.[2]
>
> Marriage is my way and who does not abide by my way, is not of us".[3]

ʿAbdullāh-bin-ʿUmar[4] used to fast continuously and remain in prayers for the whole night. The Prophet advised him:

> "Your body has a right unto you; and your eyes, and your wife too. Fast on certain days, but do not on others".[5]

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1. *Fatah-ul-Bari*, Vol. IX, p. 96, on the authority of Saʿad-bin-ʿAbi Waqas.
2. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*, on the authority of Abdullah-bin-ʿAbbas
3. *Bukhāri* and *Muslim*, on the authority of Anas
4. Son of Caliph ʿUmar and a companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.
5. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*, on the authority of Abdullah-bin-ʿUmar

The people who held to this way of life prayed thus:

> "Our Lord! Give unto us in the World that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and guard us from the doom of Fire."
>
> (*Al-Baqarah*: 201)

This social order does not assign any merit to prayer and penance in an abandoned cave. Here excellence lies in remembrance of the Creator in the hustle and bustle of daily affairs, business engagement and the struggle of life.

> "Men whom neither merchandise nor sale beguileth from remembrance of Allah and constancy in prayer and paying to the poor their due; who fear a day when hearts and eyeballs will be overturned."
>
> (*An-Nūr*: 37)

These people do not deem it sufficient to worship God at certain hours of the day but also consider it incumbent on them to earn their livelihood through labour and toil, business and trade, as the God ordains:

> "And when the prayer is ended, then disperse in the land and seek of Allah's bounty, and remember Allah much, that ye may be successful."
>
> (*Al-Jum'ah*: 10)

The fundamental precepts recognised by this civilization for raising the edifice of its social structure, the ethical code accepted for the behaviour of its adherents and the criterion evolved for discrimination of the right from wrong never change. Nor does it shift its standards of judgement, like intellectual civilization, with the passage of time or broadening of its sphere of knowledge or moral,

intellectual and material progress or regress. What is commendable for it shall ever remain so while that which is prohibited will always be rejected by it. If holds up the qualities of chastity, virtue, piety, honesty, faithfulness, truthfulness and the like, and abhors licentiousness, wickedness, laxity, hypocrisy, knavery, falsehood, and similar lewdness in all climes, times and regions. No amount of sophistry or rationalisation, utility or gain, diplomacy or design can change its decision in regard to these essential postulates of ethical code. This is so because its standard of moral behaviour is not instinct or inclination of human beings, nor, yet, the expendiency, utility or acceptance of anything by human intellect. It regards all these as changeable norms, and, therefore, unreliable to act as determinant standards for the fundamental canons of human morality. It accepts only divine revelation as the ultimate criterion for delimitation and evaluation of human thought, attitude and behaviour.

> "So set thy purpose (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright—the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man.
>
> There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know not——."

(*Ar-Rūm* : 30)

In this way this civilization saves itself from corruption and, what is more, continues to ward off the defilement and reforms itself of the disagreeable and extraneous elements. It is to be noted that the systems of speculative thought and social orders basing their claim on intellectual apprehension, ultimately fall a prey to

sophism. With no faith in the permanence and stability of moral standards, they are inevitably led to automistic relativism or moral fluidity ending in the moral confusion of their people as could be witnessed during the periods of Grecian, Roman and Iranian decay, and even in the present-day Europe. Their failure to provide permanent, balanced and coherent plan of social conduct is, in the ultimate analysis, the cause of decay of these civilizations which cannot be set right except in the light of revelatory guidance.

It is not possible to indicate here the outlines of Islamic civilization and its characteristics in any detail. Even a voluminous treatise may be insufficient to do full justice to this subject. I have, therefore, simply pointed out some of its salient features to give you an idea of the spirit and temperament of Islamic social order. I hope that the essential qualities of different civilizations, their dissimilar dispositions and distinguishing features would have been made clear to you.

Lastly, I would like to tell you that I have nothing more to add if you still consider materialistic civilization preferable for humanity at large; for, this civilization is already predominant over a larger portion of our globe, and, despite its immense popularity, frantic efforts are being ceaselessly made for the perfection and extension of its domain. Nation after nation is being jettisoned at its altar and one need not make any sacrifice to fall in line with it. It is an ocean extending from west to east; a powerful current of water to which you have simply to submit yourself for being carried away by it.

But if your choice falls against this civilization, then

you would surely have to struggle hard, swim against the current, nay, dam the flow and change the course of this mighty current. You shall have first to sacrifice your own desires and likings, thoughts and ideals, habits and customs which have become a part of your own self in the course of past couple of centuries of materialistic dominance. You shall have to give up your cherished desires and aspirations for a higher and nobler cause; reshape your educational structure in order to cohere your life with it and subserve the purpose you have in view. You shall also have to give up whatever does not fit in with this scheme or comes into conflict with the end in view.

This is the loftiest ideal and, at the same time, most difficult task one can choose, but, it happens to be solely your responsibility. The social and cultural structures of corporate existence that the world has come across so far have all been tried more than once but each one of these has failed miserably. Now the structure of social order which you own remains to be tried. It had been enforced once for a short while and proved immensely successful. Now its worn out edifice needs renovation and is looking forward for some one to take up this arduous task. The Poet of the East, Mohammad Iqbal, has already rung his clarion call:

> "Rise, O architect of Haram, and reconstruct the world, afresh.
> Rise, for it is not the time to sleep or refresh."

It appears that Providence has already destined that this edifice should be renovated and raised afresh, for the Most Merciful does not desire destruction of His earth, and, if you do not come forward, others will be raised by

Him for accomplishing the task :

> "And if ye turn away He will exchange you for some other folk, and they will not be the likes of you."
>
> (*Mūhammad* : 38)

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